Shadows: The Horror Movie Heroes
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/33630412.

Rating:
Teen And Up Audiences

Archive Warning:
No Archive Warnings Apply

Category:
Multi

Fandom:
僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia

Relationship:
Midoriya Izuku & Shinsou Hitoshi, Jirou Kyouka/Kaminari Denki/Shinsou Hitoshi, Jirou Kyouka & Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Jirou Kyouka & Gran Torino, Jirou Kyouka & Shuuzenji Chiyo | Recovery Girl, Gran Torino/Shuuzenji Chiyo | Recovery Girl

Character:
Midoriya Izuku, Shinsou Hitoshi, Jirou Kyouka, Kaminari Denki, Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Gran Torino (My Hero Academia), Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Toogata Mirio, Amajiki Tamaki, Hadou Nejire, Original Characters

Additional Tags:
Scary Midoriya Izuku, Genius Midoriya Izuku, Fake Villain AU, Villain Midoriya Izuku, Villain Shinsou Hitoshi, Quirkless Midoriya Izuku, Jirou Kyouka has One For All Quirk, Sassy Kyouka Jirou, I add tags and relationships as I write, Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia Manga Spoilers, Confident Midoriya Izuku, Yagi Toshinori | All Might Bashing

Language:
English

Series:
Part 5 of For The Want Of A Nail

Collections:
Fanfiction ***I*** Deem Worthy Of The Name, No_ofa_roundhurrr,

Ongoing Fics (bnha), ☆ <100k Fav Fics Bnha ☆, Bnha Bookclub Discord Recs, ☆My Hero Stories Worth Your Time☆, FreakingAmazingFics, Rhynes MHA favs, Quirkless Deku, Creative Chaos Discord Recs, Jeru's Top Fav My Hero Academia fics, RivsInprogressReading, Banco Fic, The "OMG I Can't Believe This" Collection, Мои_любимые_работы, BaNHAmmer, Wolfis MyHeroAcademia Library, craftyreader_favs, Lex's Favorite BNHA Fics ٩(●˙▿˙●)۶, .⋆˚.•*.↩My Bebu multiverse♡♡↬.*•.˚⋆., hereBeGems, Favorites BNHA☆, mort's bnha favorites!!, The Witch's Woods, Still_to_read, Long_fics, why I only sleep an hour a night, Autiser’s Favorites, Leannic Recs, The SMARTEST MF: Izuku Midoriya, Orbit’s Fics To Reread, amazing izuku fics, Most favorite works (GoSleep_NoThatSoInteresting), Like A Favorite Sweater, I will re read it again insted of studying for sure, Alternative Universes of Fandoms I enjoy., Got 99 problems but these ain't one, BEST BOI IZUKU_top BNHA works, Quirkless!Deku Fics, fics i can and will stay up to 3am to re-read, My Favourite BNHA Longfics, From the Vault, MHA_fanfics_because_idk, mha fics that are my will to live, Writeass's favorite fics, viri's hermit hole of good shit, Genmhasmfffffff, The_best_fics_:D, The Essence of Perfection, Yukari's mess of jumbled preferences, Todo lo que puedo llegar a OLVIDAR, Bnha fics I don't want to loose, These fics made me scream, 10/10 would re-read bnha, ✧Insomnia Reads✧, 1scurrentlyread1ng:), The Collossally Curious Collection of Carefully Curated Stories, My Favourite Fanfics, Best Izuku Fics, These fics emotionally wrecked me, BNHA - My favorite fanfics, Boku no Hero Academia Fanfics, I live for Deku (and Class 1-A), League of Villains as a Family / Villain Deku (maybe League of Villains and Deku), My Personal BNHA Fics Recommendations, fics better than a lot of published novels, Vigilante!AU, Izuku don’t need no quirk, (mostly) just some funky lil Izu fics, Quirkless Deku Supremacy, BNHA keepers, Silvernight01's Library, 📚 Wyrm's Fic Hoard 🐲, Eatbook's Cherished and wanting more All Fandoms, Академия. Любимые, I need þerapy but instead I'll read comfort fanfics, The 1412's Library of Good Reads, The VIP Section, CKFTR, xans midnight reads🌙 - but only the good ones🕳, just some incredible bnha ff, Still reading - bnha - my attention span is really short, Best incomplete mha fics, ongoing fics that make me have a ton of tabs open, Fics that I want to read once they are complete, Magnolia's Favourite Fics, And now for something different, ☆*: .｡. o(≧▽≦)o .｡.:*☆, Mays My Villain Academia, SMALL COLLECTION OF ABSOLUTE PERFECTION | BNHA, The Foxy List, Best of BNHA, 2023_Fanfiction's_Rap-up__V.R, My Hero Academia Fanfictions., i just need this to work plz, Hexxe•Bookshelf, My Favorite Works Of

All Time <3, Mha fics that I hyperventilate over at 3am

Stats:

Published: 2021-09-02 Updated: 2023-01-08 Words: 62,657
Chapters: 35/?

Shadows: The Horror Movie Heroes

by Clouds (myheadinthecoudsnotcomingdown)

Summary

Izuku Midoriya and Hitoshi Shinso are never going to be the kind of heroes that make civilains think *'oh, thank god we're saved,'* when they arrive at the scene. There's too much prejudice against them, so a kid with a villain quirk and one with no quirk at all are never going to be able to inspire that sort of trust.

So instead of becoming heroes that bring hope, they decide to become the next best thing.

The kind of heroes that make villains think, *'oh, fuck, we're screwed.'*

This fic has a discord.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

- Inspired by Hero Class Civil Warfare by RogueDruid (Icarius51)

Fear as a Weapon

Izuku couldn't breathe.

"Sorry kid." The sludge villain squeezed a little tighter. "I didn't know All Might was in town, I can't afford to stick around."

Izuku's vision started going dark and he clawed uselessly at the villain. This was really it, wasn't it? He was going to die. Reluctantly, he stopped fighting, slowly giving into fear and dread as the rest of his air ran out.

"Detroit….Smash!!!"

Izuku heard a terrified scream from the villain before he passed out and the next thing he knew he was getting slapped awake by All Might. Wait…

"All Might?!" Izuku sat straight up. "You saved me?! Of course you saved me! I...thank you for saving me, I have a notebook...will you please…"

All Might gave a booming laugh and handed him his notebook, "Already done, my boy! My apologies for letting you get caught by that villain! Back in the day, he would never have even reached the sewers! Now if you'll excuse me I must be on my way!"

"Wait!" Izuku reached toward him. "I have so much to ask…"

Kacchan was right. Izuku was an idiot. He'd realized that All Might was about to launch off, but he'd grabbed onto his leg anyway. He *knew* how far All Might could jump! He knew every statistic there was on him! He knew how dangerous that was! Why in the world had he done that?!

As soon as he noticed Izuku, All Might started shaking his leg, "Come on, kid, I get being a fan, but this is too much!"

Izuku clung on even tighter, "If I let go now I'll die!"

"Oh…" All Might blinked like he hadn't even thought about that and grabbed Izuku's collar. "Right. Just close your mouth and eyes kid. You look gross."

Izuku did as he was told and after a few seconds, he felt a jolt as All

Might landed. Immediately, all the terror-fueled strength he'd hadn't known he'd had left him and he collapsed onto the ground, "I'm alive!"

"Barely." All Might huffed. "What was so important that you did something so stupid, kid?"

"I…" Izuku pulled himself to his feet. "I needed to ask you a question."

"Well, kid, out with it." All Might prodded. "I don't have all day, you know!"

Izuku took a deep breath, "It's just...my whole life, I've wanted to be a hero, but everybody says I can't. So, uh, is it possible...even though I'm quirkless, can I be a hero like you?!"

Sometime while he was talking, smoke started filling the rooftop and by the time he gathered his courage to look, All Might was...gone? Izuku screamed.

"It's still me kid, don't be so dramatic." All Might groaned and lifted up his shirt to show Izuku a large scar. "This is a scary career kid. You fight powerful villains head on long enough and...well, this injury was just one guy. So can you be a hero kid? Not without a quirk."

All Might kept talking, but Izuku was too focused on holding back his tears to hear any of it. At some point, All Might pushed past him and after that, there was really no point in staying, so Izuku forced himself to get moving. He'd really just been lying to himself all these years, hadn't he?

Izuku didn't really know where he was going. Probably home, since there was no point in going to the villain fight he could hear going on in the distance, now that his notes were useless. If even All Might said it was impossible, then it was true. He couldn't be a hero. What was he going to do now?

He was so wrapped up in his thoughts that he almost didn't hear the commotion in the alleyway. It wasn't nearly as loud as the fight in the distance, but it was still enough to get his attention. Now that he was paying attention, Izuku could hear punches being landed and someone yelling about a villain and before he knew it, he was walking toward the fight on autopilot. It must be a minor villain, probably with a weaker quirk. The ones with stronger quirks usually drew a crowd and most of the heroes were probably at the other fight, so even if he was

still going to be a hero, there really wasn't any point in watching.

He found himself rushing to the alley anyway, only to skid to a stop as he realized it wasn't a villain fight at all. A group of kids his own age was clumped around a few ringleaders, who were either pinning down or beating up their current victim, a lanky kid with purple hair and...well, it was most likely a verbal quirk, considering that the bullies were bothering to cover his mouth. If it had been Izuku, Kacchan would have just let him scream.

"Why are you even *thinking* of applying for UA?" One of the ringleaders sneered. "You're a villain and that's what you'll always be! Why would a school like UA even *think* of letting someone like you be a hero?!"

So the kid had a villain's quirk. Izuku winced sympathetically. That was pretty much as bad as being quirkless in a lot of people's eyes. Somebody landed a punch to the kid's gut and he let out a muffled grunt. Izuku couldn't help himself. He'd stood between Kacchan and the other kids so many times that his feet moved on their own and he took two steps forward until the kid saw him. Instead of looking at him with hope or gratefulness, though, the kid just shook his head sternly and shook his head. Izuku froze.

One of the bullies snarled, "What are you looking at, *villain?* "

Izuku ducked behind a dumpster as the bully turned his head. The kid obviously didn't want him interfering, not that Izuku could do much good anyway, but still… After a few seconds, he peeked out, but made sure to keep to the shadows as much as he could so he wouldn't be seen. The bullies were looking around nervously and even though they'd turned back to the kid, they had obviously been thrown off their rhythm. Interesting...

"Do you think he somehow called for one of his villain friends?" One of the lackeys hissed. "What are we gonna do if he calls for backup?"

"He didn't call for backup." A ringleader insisted, but Izuku noted with surprise that he didn't believe it. "The villain doesn't have any friends to come help him in the first place."

Izuku frowned. He at least had Kacchan, even though he wasn't quite sure if that counted as friendship, but from the sound of it, this kid didn't have any friends at all...that must be so lonely! There must be something he could do to help…

The bullies were still nervous and a couple had started shifting like they were about to bolt. Izuku had to stop himself before he started muttering. They were that thrown off just by the suggestion that back-up was coming? What were they so afraid of? Was it just that they didn't know what might come? If they knew who was hiding, they wouldn't be scared at all, so that fear of the unknown must be part of it. What if they thought he had a strong quirk? Would they be more scared or less?

One of the bullies glanced around the alley before huffing and shoving the kid to the ground, "Whatever, I was getting bored anyway. Don't even bother applying to UA, *villain."*

The kid glared after them and Izuku ducked back behind the dumpster as they stalked out of the alley. He waited until the last one was gone before running toward the kid, "Hey, are you ok?"

The kid rolled his eyes. "Just peachy."

"Oh, I, uh, I have a first aid kit!" Izuku swung his bag off his shoulder and started digging through it. "I have badges and burn cream and…"

"Don't bother. I have my own."

The kid was already kneeling next to his own backpack and within a second he'd pulled out a first aid kit just as intense as Izuku's, "So, you're obviously pretty beat up too. What do they hate you for?"

"Oh," Izuku's face fell, "I'm, uh, I'm quirkless…"

All of a sudden, Izuku's brain felt fuzzy and his arms fell limply at his sides, his fingers barely managing to hang onto the strap of his backpack. The kid refused to look at him as he started bandaging his bruises, "Go away."

Izuku couldn't say he was very surprised when his body started obeying on it's own. Brainwashing would explain why the other kids were calling him a villain and why they were covering his mouth, since it seemed to activate with a question. That was such a cool quirk! He really hoped that kid ignored his bullies and tried for UA anyway because he would be able to save so many people someday!

It took a few blocks to qualify as *away* enough for the quirk to deactivate, and the moment he had his brain back, Izuku sighed in defeat. There was no point in turning around and trying to find the kid again, he was probably long gone by now, but Izuku had ended up

wandering in the direction of the other villain fight, so he might as well stop by there now. It didn't take him long at all to find the crowd, but instead of catching the tail end of the clean up, the fight was still going on. That must be one strong villain!

"How long has that kid been in there?"

"I dunno, but if he's still alive, he hasn't got long."

The villain had a hostage? What was the villain's quirk? Was it something with fire or...Izuku finally elbowed his way through enough of the crowd to be able to see the villain and he gasped. The sludge villain must have escaped the bottles that All Might shoved him in!

This was his fault. If he hadn't grabbed onto All Might, he wouldn't have dropped the bottles and even if for some reason he had, then he would have still had just enough time left to recapture him! Izuku cursed himself and pushed a little closer. Was the hostage even still alive? Izuku had felt like he was going to die after only a few seconds!

The hostage was struggling weakly at this point, but considering all the fires the heroes were fighting, he must have some sort of fire quirk. Izuku leaned forward as he saw a tiny bit of flame burst from one of the victim's hands...no! It was an explosion!

"Kacchan!" Izuku yelled and almost started running before he caught himself. That kid earlier was right. If he went out there right now, he'd just be an extra victim for the heroes to save, but...there had to be something he could do! All Might wasn't coming, he was all out of energy for the day, but...well, actually the villain didn't know that, did he?

In spite of himself, Izuku smiled. The sludge villain was terrified of All Might, just like those bullies had been scared of him when he'd hidden behind the dumpster...well, more scared of the *idea* of him, but still...They'd given up rather than risk fighting against an enemy they couldn't beat.

A half-baked plan already in mind, Izuku took a big breath and yelled at the top of his lungs, "All Might's at a fight just down the street! He'll be here any minute!"

The crowd started chanting All Might's name and the villain instantly tensed, torn between taking over his hostage, who wouldn't be a very good disguise at this point, and making a run for it. Izuku elbowed his way to the very front of the crowd. He just needed to give one final

push.

The villain was looking around frantically for All Might, so it didn't take long for his eyes to widen in recognition as he spotted Izuku in the crowd. Izuku gave his best, most confident smile as he called out, "Well? Do you really think you can escape the number one hero *again?* Really?"

The villain hesitated for one final second before expelling Kacchan onto the pavement with a squelch and making a run for it. The heroes rushed him instantly, no longer having to avoid hurting Kacchan or risk getting caught in one of his explosions and it didn't take long before the sludge villain was once again in custody.

Izuku weaved his way back through the crowd before Kacchan could see him and made his way home deep in thought. He'd asked All Might if a quirkless kid could be a hero like him, and the answer he got was true. Izuku would never be like All Might, he wouldn't be able to bring hope the way the symbol of peace was, but…he thought back the way the bullies and the villain had run away.

Maybe he could be another kind of hero instead.

Team up

Chapter Summary

Izuku makes a proposition.

Chapter Notes

Art!
I drew this picture of Izuku and Shinso in their future costumes!
joshonboard
Hollis
Dragons
CryptidCat
Who, me? (Sky)
claire ;P

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi reapplied the bandages from a few days ago, even though the cuts were almost healed by now. His bullies had laid off him for the moment, too scared that his *mysterious backup* would pop out of the shadows at any moment. Hitoshi knew better than to expect that to last forever, especially once they figured out that the guy they were so afraid of was actually just a quirkless kid from another school who had his own bullies to worry about. Still, the break was nice while it lasted.

Hitoshi stretched and climbed into bed to browse his phone until he felt tired enough to sleep. His foster parents didn't really care what he did when he had insomnia as long as he was quiet and didn't leave his room. But then again, the quiet rule had been pretty much constant since he turned four, so it wasn't that bad. At least he didn't have to worry about sharing a room, even if it stung a little that the other kids would rather let him have the attic to himself rather than share a room with the *villain*.

Once his current fosters realized a roommate wasn't going to work, they'd cleaned out the tiny space above the garage and shoved him there to make room for the other kids. Half the walls were bare plywood and it was miserably hot in the summer, but Hitoshi couldn't'

complain. At least he had a window in the roof so he could watch the stars when he inevitably got bored of his phone. It was cloudy tonight, but he glanced up anyway to see what constellations were out, then promptly scrambled out of bed, barely stifling a scream as he glimpsed a shadow, a human shaped shadow, peering through his window. Hitoshi was half-convinced he'd imagined it…

Until the shadow knocked.

Hitoshi seriously considered just making a run for his life, nevermind what his foster parents would say before stealing his courage and reaching for his phone. He turned on the flashlight and shone it toward the window. It was probably nothing, right? Just a racoon or maybe a tree branch, even though there weren't any trees near his window. Still, there was no point getting in trouble for a false alarm.

When he saw that it was the kid from the alley, Hitoshi could only blink in bewilderment. The kid gave him a bright smile as he waved. Through his window. On his roof.

"What the…" Hitoshi breathed.

"Hi Shinso!" The kid's voice was slightly muffled through the glass. "Let me in!"

Hitoshi's curiosity won out over his intelligence and before he knew it, he'd reached out and unlatched the window. The kid tumbled onto his bed with a quiet *thump* and ruffled his curls, which did absolutely nothing to make them more presentable, before looking up, "Thanks! I'm Izuku Midoirya, by the way! I don't think I ever got around to mentioning that the other day."

"I thought I told you to go away." Hitoshi said blankly.

"Oh, you did!" Midoriya nodded agreeably. "You have a really, *really* cool quirk, by the way! You're gonna be able to do so many awesome things with it!"

"So why are you here?" Hitoshi could feel a migraine coming on. "Actually, back up, *how* are you here? I didn't even tell you my name."

"Oh, well, um…" Midoriya looked almost embarrassed. "I actually started with your uniform?"

"My uniform…" Hitoshi did a double take. "Wait, started?!"

Midoriya nodded, “Well, I know there’s a lot of schools that use the same uniform, so I looked at what time they ended and crossed off the ones that were within walking distance of where we met. Then I scanned through the websites of ones left because at least at my school the bullies are ones with the strongest quirks and end up getting featured a lot, so I figured I might be able to find one of yours. Once I’d found your school, I dug a little deeper and figured out it’s *your* last year too, but I couldn’t find what class you were in or what your name was, so I just kinda asked around about a kid with a verbal activation quirk, threw out 90% of the rumors, figured out what your name was and used that to find you!”

Hitoshi stared at Midoriya, who was looking at him expectantly, “That’s...kinda creepy.”

To his surprise, Midoriya grinned “I know! Isn’t it great?”

“Uh…” Hitoshi raised an eyebrow. “No?”

“Ok, well, not traditionally, but…” Midoriya bit his lip. “You want to be a hero, right?”

Hitoshi nodded hesitantly, “I’m going to go to UA. Are you here to stop me?”

“No!” Midoriya clapped a hand over his mouth as he realized how loud he’d been. “Uh, no, I actually want to be a hero too, so I was kinda hoping we could help each other? Any maybe be, like, hero partners? Because, uh...well…”

Hitoshi gestured for him to continue, “Because what? Because you think hanging around the *villain* will make you less of a target?”

“No…” Midoriya puffed his cheeks out in frustration. “It’s just...let’s face it, neither of us is ever going to be the kind of hero that brings people hope. Kids like us can’t be heroes like All Might”

“Maybe *you* can’t.” Hitoshi snarled. “But I’m gonna prove them all wrong and be…”

Midoriya waved his hands frantically, “No, we can’t be heroes like *All Might,* but we *can* be different! You’ve seen how much prejudice there is. You’ve got a villain quirk, Shinso, and I’m quirkless. Even if a few of the more open minded civilians decide to trust us, there’s still going to be a lot of people who are never going to be willing to see past our quirks.”

Hitoshi huffed, “Ouch, ok. Great pep talk. Real inspiring.”

“Let me finish.” Midoriya said. “We might not be the kind of heroes that can make civilians think ‘ *oh, thank god we’re saved* ,’ when we arrive at the scene. So what if instead, we become the kind of heroes that make villains think, *‘oh, fuck, we’re screwed.’* ”

Midoriya’s expression had morphed into a sly smile, but Hitoshi hung back, “What exactly are you suggesting?”

“I’m saying that we don’t have to bring hope if we can weaponize fear. People are already afraid of you.” Midoirya said. “And they’re either freaked out by me or think I’m weak. I think we can use that to our advantage. We’re never going to be very popular, but we can still save people!”

Hitoshi was silent for a long moment, “You’re insane.”

Midoriya’s face fell, but Hitoshi was too busy thinking through everything he’d just heard to comfort him. Fear tactics were normally associated with villains, but so was brainwashing. Not to mention that fear had been just enough to keep his bullies off his back for a few days. So yeah, Midoriya’s idea was crazy, but oddly enough, it was so crazy it just might work. Plus, it wasn’t like he had literally anything else going for him.

“Ok, sure, I’m down. Let’s do it.” Hitoshi said finally, making Midoriya do a double take. “But that still doesn’t explain what you’re doing in my house in the middle of the night. Do you know how much trouble I could get in if my foster parents caught you?”

“I was going to wait until tomorrow and find you after school!” Midoriya insisted, blushing. “But, uh…I got too excited.”

He at least had the good grace to look sheepish and in spite of himself, Hitoshi smiled and shook his head, “Yep, you’re insane.”

Midoriya grinned hesitantly, “I, uh, guess I’ll take that as a compliment.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: September 15, 2021

Introductions

Chapter Notes

Art!
Hollis
Pyro, the flame God?
1zu or Quin
Sober X
claire ;P
Glitch
Lilac
Hollis
MantisHead
Who, me? (Sky) X X

Memes!
X X X X X

More Memes at End

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mom fretted in the doorway as Izuku organized his notes and papers so that Shinso wouldn't be *too* overwhelmed when he arrived. Thankfully, he didn't seem like the type who scared too easily or else Izuku would have already ruined all chances for their...friendship? Partnership? Whatever it was before it even began. It wasn't his fault that he got so excited! It hadn't even occurred to him that Shinso might not be nearly as excited as he was about using fear to become a different kind of hero. To Izuku, the realization felt like it had completely turned the world on its head. Becoming a hero like All Might had always felt like an impossible mountain he needed to climb and every person who called him weak or useless, just because he didn't have a quirk was yet another boulder that he needed to scramble over just to find the path, not to mention actually climbing the mountain. Once he stopped worrying about being liked, though, it was like someone had taken dynamite to the road and blown all the boulders to shreds. It was still an uphill battle, but now it was doable. If he didn't have to be liked, then all that he had to do was be hated and Izuku had *plenty* of experience with that.

For the first time in his life, *I'm going to be a hero* felt less like a dream and more like a promise and even if it was a little selfish, he really

hoped that Shinso felt the same way. It would be a lot easier to be a hero if he actually had someone rooting for him.

The doorbell rang and Izuku leapt to his feet, “I’ll get it!”

Mom pursed her lips as he pushed past her and Izuku felt a pang of guilt. She was always a bit disappointed whenever he got a renewed sense of hero fervor and he was pretty sure that she was secretly hoping that he’d come home one day and announce that he’d decided on a more sensible, safer career. However much he hated worrying her, though, he hated the idea of being useless even more, so hopefully she’d at least be proud of him.

Shinso looked bored when Izuku opened the door, but his stance was guarded, so Izuku suspected that it was an intentional move, kind of like how Izuku sometimes smiled to hide how nervous he was. Izuku grinned brightly and grabbed Shinso’s arm. If he was feeling anxious, then Izuku would just have to show him that there was nothing to be nervous about, “Come on in! I’ve been waiting for you!”

Shinso didn’t say anything, but he did nod and take off his shoes, so Izuku kept rambling to fill the silence, “My room is this way. I hope you don’t mind that I’ve kinda been getting a head start on some research.”

Shinso was already starting to lose a little bit of his bored expression, “Research?”

Izuku shrugged, “Like tactics and strategy, you know? Like how fear tactics have been used in the past! Some of them obviously rely on a lot of violence, so those aren’t really something we want in *our* arsenal, but we should still know they exist and maybe we can find a way to modify them to fit our goals a little better.”

Shinso raised an eyebrow, “So basically you’ve been studying villains.”

Izuku blushed, “Not *just* villains…”

“Good.” Shinso smirked. “How else are we supposed to scare them out of their minds if we don’t know what they’re used to? I like the idea of turning their own tricks against them. It’s like...intentional karma.”

Izuku blinked, “I...I hadn’t thought of it like that.”

“Um, Izuku?” Mom said softly. “Is this your friend?”

“Yeah!” Izuku stepped to the side so she could see him better. “This is Shinso!

Shinso gave her a little wave and Izuku realized he was probably used to introducing himself silently so that he didn’t make anyone uncomfortable with his quirk. Izuku understood. He didn’t often introduce his quirk at first because he was afraid of how people would react, but he didn’t have to worry about people getting scared, just hostile. He just wished that Mom hadn’t looked so grateful that Shinso stayed quiet.

He probably shouldn’t have told her about Shinso’s quirk, but when he’d said that he was inviting a friend over, she’d wanted to know everything about him. Izuku had, as usual, gotten too excited and started rambling about how cool Shinso’s quirk was, because it *was,* and how it was going to be so useful when they were heroes. It wasn’t until he saw the terrified look on her face that he realized she might see Shinso as a threat and not an ally. Instantly, he started being more vague, but the damage had already been done. At least he’d managed to convince her to let him come over still, but realistically he knew that Mom only allowed it so that she could supervise them instead of letting Izuku go off to meet with his dangerous new friend somewhere where she couldn’t protect him. It wasn’t fair, but Izuku was going to become just as dangerous as Shinso was and prove that he didn’t *need* her protection. They were going to be amazing heroes.

Mom smiled nervously at Shinso and turned back to Izuku, “Um, ok. Well, keep the door open and I’ll be out here if you need anything, baby. Anything at all. Just yell. Ok?”

Izuku’s heart sank, “Got it.”

Mom nodded and stepped aside so that she wasn’t blocking the hallway. Izuku didn’t say anything else as he led Shinso to his room and closed the door as much as possible so that it was just barely cracked open. He grimaced and turned to Shinso, “I am so sorry.”

Shinso shrugged, “My foster parents are the same way, don’t worry about it. I mean, we’re trying to turn that fear to our advantage right? That’s kinda the whole idea.”

Izuku frowned and went to his desk. “I guess so. Ok, um…here’s everything I’ve got so far. Where do you want to start?”

Toshinori was a little overwhelmed at the moment. He wasn’t ready to

retire yet. There were still so many people to save and the world still needed a symbol of peace. Sure, Nedzu had pointed out that teaching wasn't *really* a retirement, but Toshinori still felt like he was being forced away from the front lines. He had to face the truth, All Might was past his prime.

Still, retirement or no, Toshinori knew that he wouldn't be able to really rest until he had found a successor. One for All was a sacred power and the next symbol of peace would be able to care for the world in his place, so it was his responsibility to nurture their progression and encourage them to become the shining pinnacle of justice he had once been. The only issue was, well, *finding* the perfect successor.

Toshinori put his vibrating phone back in his pocket, deciding to let Nighteye's call go to voicemail. Again. It was impossible to tell whether he was calling about One for All or about Toshinori's new job at UA...well, maybe it wasn't impossible, but that would require actually picking up the phone and talking to him, so it was out of the question. Whatever conversation Nighteye wanted, Toshinori wasn't ready to have it yet.

For now, he needed to focus on finding his elusive successor. He could always wait until classes started at UA and have his pick from among the elite students there, but he couldn't' help feeling anxious to find the next symbol of peace as soon as humanly possible. If he could find a first year *before* they entered UA, then there was a chance they'd be able to receive One for All before classes even started! Yes, that would be the best case scenario.

He wished he knew who had somehow gotten the sludge villain to run the other day. He had been standing in the crowd cursing himself when the cry went out that All Might was just down the street, so he knew it had been a ruse, but somehow, it had been just enough to get the villain to drop the hostage, which was more than any of the heroes present had accomplished. The child that had started the cry undoubtedly had a good head for strategy and would likely make a good successor, but no one had been able to tell who exactly had been the one to set the plan in motion, so there was no way for Toshinori to find them. Toshinori was obviously a little disappointed, but the child would undoubtedly become a great hero on their own merits someday, so he couldn't afford to spend too much time worrying about it. He just needed to find someone with a good heart and a strong enough will that…

Toshinori stumbled as he ran into someone, knocking them to the ground. He'd been too wrapped up in his thoughts! He shouldn't have gotten so distracted, some hero he was. He bent over to help the man up, "Oh, I'm so sorry! I wasn't watching where I was going, this is all my fault!"

"You think?!" A young lady glared at him as she practically pushed him out of the way to help the man up, "Are you ok, Dad?"

The man laughed and rolled his shoulder, "I'm fine. You're stronger than you look, man!"

"Uh...thank you." Toshinori said nervously. "Again, I am so sorry…"

"You better be." The young lady hadn't stopped glaring at him. "You could have hurt him, especially if you've got a strength quirk. Watch where you're going next time!"

"Don't' be rude, Kyoka, he already apologized." The man smiled. "My name is Kyotoku Jiro, and this is my daughter Kyoka Jiro. And seriously, don't sweat it, I'm just fine!"

"Well, uh, that's good to hear." Toshinori said. "It's admirable that you are so concerned about your father's safety, young lady."

"Well, somebody has to be." Young Jiro muttered. "Goodness knows *he* doesn't care about it enough."

Kyotoku laughed and ruffled her hair, "Well, that's what I have *you* for, my little hero. And soon enough the entire world is gonna see it! Once you get into UA…"

Jiro pushed him away, "Stop it, Dad. You're so embarrassing!"

Toshinori perked up, "You're going to UA?"

"I have to pass the entrance exam first." Jiro huffed. "But, yeah, that's the plan."

Toshinori considered his next move carefully. This young lady was a bit rough around the edges, but she had an inner fire and protectiveness that reminded him of Nana. She would make a wonderful hero and, with some training, she had the potential to be an amazing symbol of peace too. He also couldn't' deny that a ten month head start would give her a huge advantage over if he waited until school began, and since she already had that drive to be a

hero...he nodded firmly, mind made up.

“I have considerable experience working with heroes, in fact, I’ve worked at All Might’s agency for almost my entire career.” Toshinori smiled softly. “I’d be happy to help train you for the entrance exam, if you’d like.”

“Really?!” Kyotoku’s eyes widened. “Well, Kyoka? What are you waiting for? This is the opportunity of a lifetime! You know what I always say: never turn down an adventure! Say yes!”

Jiro just ignored her father and looked at Toshinori skeptically, “And what would this *training* look like?”

“Uh...muscle training, mostly.” Toshinori answered, a bit thrown off. “And quirk training. Who knows, with enough training, your quirk might develop into something else entirely! I have other...resources that, if you choose to accept them, will set you on the path to becoming one of the greatest heroes in the world.”

Jiro frowned for another long moment and Toshinori was terrified she was going to say no until she shrugged, “Well, it’s not like I have another training plan right now, but this had better be worth it, ok? If not, I’m dropping you.”

Toshinori blinked in shock, “O-of course, that sounds reasonable.”

Jiro nodded and her father instantly wrapped an arm around both of them, “Ah, my little girl’s gonna be a hero!”

“Dad…” Jiro blushed. “I’m not a little girl anymore!”

Toshinori smiled. The girl knew how to stand up for herself. Good. He had a feeling he’d made the right choice.

Chapter End Notes

More Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X XX X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X XX X X
Next Update: September 22, 2021

Potential

Chapter Summary

Great theory. Poor execution.

Chapter Notes

Art!
existential magical girl dread X
procrastination at its finest
Sober
OgawaIsNowMyHusband
Hollis X
1zu
Julie-o
Mantishead

Memes!
X X X X X X X X

More Memes at End!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It felt like Kacchan was getting worse. Maybe Izuku was imagining it, but ever since he'd gotten captured by the sludge villain, Kacchan was about twice as mean as he had been. He must be compensating for being caught as the victim and trying to regain either a sense of control or a sense of power, but in the end, it didn't matter what had led to the change, it just mattered that Izuku stayed out of his attack radius as much as humanly possible.

That wasn't an option during class, unfortunately, especially since most of his teachers would turn a blind eye to Izuku getting tripped, burned or hurt if it meant that Kacchan wouldn't interrupt class, but after class was when the worst beatings happened anyway, so if he could just stay out of sight for long enough for Kacchan to leave, then Izuku could go hang out with Shinso at the park. He just had to stay out of sight.

Izuku looked around for somewhere to hide. Inside a locker would be fine if he had a guarantee that he could get out, but if the locker latched and he got trapped, then it would defeat the whole purpose of hiding in the first place. Empty classrooms weren't a safe bet because

Kacchan would send his lackeys to check those and if he tried going to a teacher it would just make things worse. If only there were some way to give himself an advantage and take the high ground…Izuku almost stopped in his tracks as it hit him. *Take the high ground.* Sure, Katsuki could easily reach him with his explosions, but that was only if he thought to look up!

Izuku sped up and skidded around the corner, making a beeline for the trophy case. Kacchan had won pretty much every award the school offered, so his name and face were featured multiple times, while Izuku may as well not be a student. That didn't matter though, what mattered was that the case didn't go all the way to the ceiling. There was about a foot of space on top with a little decorative lip along the edge of the case that should be enough to mostly hide him if he laid down completely flat.

Izuku grabbed a chair from an empty classroom and used it to try and scramble up the side of the case, accidentally kicking it aside as he did. It took all of his strength to get up on top of it, but he finally managed it with a grunt. It was hard to catch his breath with all the dust, so he covered his mouth and did his best to muffle how hard he was panting. This entire plan would be for nothing if Kacchan heard him and found his hiding place.

It was only a few seconds after Izuku had settled in that Kacchan and a couple of their other classmates rounded the corner. Kacchan had a murderous expression on his face as he looked down the hallway in both directions, "You extras split up and find that damn nerd. I'm gonna take a look around here."

His lackeys nodded and one took off in either direction while Kacchan started looking around. He peaked his head in each of the other classrooms and Izuku had to fight off disappointment when he didn't look at any of them for more than a few seconds. Then Kacchan saw the chair on the floor and his eyes narrowed.

Izuku couldn't help himself as he started trembling. If Kacchan found him, was there anything he could even do? If he was just stronger, then he could have gotten up quicker and not had to use the chair. He shouldn't have left any evidence that Kacchan could use to find him! Hiding had seemed like the perfect plan at the time, but if it didn't work, then it would just make everything worse! He needed to get better at thinking ahead and strategizing for every possibility, not just the one he hoped would happen.

Stupid dust. If he was going to be hiding in places like this frequently, he'd need to start carrying around a mask. Kacchan was getting closer and Izuku clamped his hands over his mouth again as he felt a sneeze coming on. He hated this. He *hated* being so terrified. And as much as he hated it, what made it even worse was that Kacchan didn't even know what it was like. With the exception of the sludge villain, he'd never been the victim. He didn't know what it was like to live in fear like Izuku did.

His mind was racing through all the research he'd done since meeting Shinso, and Izuku knew that there were a million and a half strategies that he *could* use, but if he tried them and failed then it would just make Kacchan even more angry than he was right now. Plus there was the fact that Izuku was pretty sure that Kacchan's fight or flight response was mostly geared toward *fight* , which meant that a fake out strategy wasn't going to work here like it did with the sludge villain. What was he supposed to do?!

Kacchan's eyes slide from the chair to the trophy case to Izuku on top. He gulped. Too late.

"There you are, Deku." Kacchan smirked. "Found you."

Kyoka wasn't quite sure what to think of her new teacher. Dad was always so gung-ho about taking advantage of new opportunities and *never saying no to an adventure* , but he was also impulsive and had a habit of not thinking things through all the way. So yeah, Dad saw absolutely nothing sketchy about some guy who supposedly worked for All Might offering to train her, but Kyoka was obviously picking up more than a few red flags that merited bringing pepper spray along to her first training session. If Toshinori Yagi hadn't been listed as an employee on All Might's website, she wouldn't have even shown up at all, but a little extra training from someone who actually knew the hero industry would be extremely valuable, so even though she was still pretty sure he was lying about *something,* she had decided to give him the benefit of the doubt. For now.

Dagabah municipal beach park. When Yagi had told her the meeting place she'd been expecting more...well, just more. The *park,* if she could even call it that, was so disused that people had started using it as a public dump site and if there had ever been a playground anywhere sound here, it had long since been buried beneath literal mountains of trash.

Yagi, of course, blended right in, so it took her a minute to realize that he'd beaten her there and was already standing on the boardwalk, looking out over the ocean. Kyoka wrinkled her nose and winced at every miniscule creak the wood made as she started picking her way to him, "No offense, but this *perfect training ground* you picked is kind of a mess."

Yagi jumped and gave her a sheepish smile, "Oh, young Jiro! I, uh, didn't see you there."

Jiro gave him a skeptical look, "So, uh, are we gonna train, or what?"

"Yes! Of course!" Yagi snapped into action and started making his way back to the beach with much less care than she had taken, most likely because he couldn't hear every concerning creek the wood made as they put weight on it, but they somehow managed to reach the sand without the boardwalk collapsing underneath them. Kyoka breathed a sigh of relief. This was definitely turning out to be an *adventure.*

"So, young Jiro," Yagi began, leading her through the piles of trash, "I must admit that I haven't been completely honest with you…"

His form started to shift and Kyoka cursed under her breath and grabbed the can of pepper spray in her pocket. Go on an adventure, Dad said, it'll be a great opportunity, he said. Kyoka swore to god if she got murdered she was going to haunt her father for the rest of his miserable life. She had no idea what kind of quik this guy had, but from the shift in size, it was most likely some kind of monster quirk. She wasn't equipped to fight that! What could she do?

Yagi had already lured her out of sight of the street, but they were still close enough that if she pepper sprayed him and bolted she might just be able to get away before he recovered. She braced her feet and as soon as the smoke had cleared enough for her to tell where the creature's eyes were, she fired. Bullseye.

The smoke surrounding Yagi finished clearing and Kyoka's eyes widened as she realized just *who* exactly she had just pepper sprayed right in the eyes right as he let out a strangled cry and collapsed back into his skeletal form with a puff of steam, "All Might?!"

"Umm…yes?" All Might coughed up a small amount of blood, making Kyoka feel even worse, "I…I, uh, well, I knew you were, ow, strong enough for my quirk. Where's…my phone…Here, call Recovery Girl?"

Jiro was shaking as she grabbed his phone out of his hand and

searched through the contacts. Thankfully, there weren't that many and Recovery Girl was already near the top of his recent calls, "Um...hello? I, uh, think I might have just attacked the number one hero. Sorry?"

Hitoshi was trying really hard to not feel betrayed. After going over to Midoriya's house, he'd thought that they were at least partners, if not friends, but here he was. At the meeting place. Alone. Midoriya really didn't strike him as the type of guy to be late, so at this point, it was probably safe to assume that he wasn't showing up at all. Maybe he'd wanted to show up and his mom just hadn't let him? That was probably just wishful thinking. It would have been nice if Midoriya still wanted to hang out with him, but he'd probably come to his senses and realized that the whole using fear as a weapon and being associated with someone with a villain's quirk was kind of a bad idea in the first place. Even if it ended up working, it was still a long shot.

Hitsohi sighed and jumped off the swing he'd been sitting on. He might as well go home and do his homework. He needed to at least make sure he could pass the Gen Ed exam once it was time to apply to UA. He shouldn't have gotten his hopes up.

"Shinso!" Midoriya's voice made him stop in his tracks. "Sorry, I'm late! I, uh, got held up, but I'm here now!"

Hitoshi looked Midoriya up and down. He was slightly favoring one ankle and his uniform was singed and torn in several places. Plus, Hitoshi was fairly certain that those were bandages peeking out from his sleeves, "Held up by who? Muggers?"

"No…" Midoirya rubbed the back of his neck, "Just some bullies. I really wish I could just make them go away. I mean, I know *how,* right? But all the study we've done is just in theory. I've never really had a chance to practice being scary, you know?"

"And I've only ever practiced being less scary." Hitoshi nodded in understanding. "So...what are we gonna do about that?"

"There's gotta be some way for us to practice…" Midoriya had started muttering to himself, so Hitoshi just let him talk and tried to catch as much as possible. "There are haunted houses, but while those might be helpful, they probably won't hire kids our age. Wait, aren't there companies that provide civilians for rescue simulations and stuff for heroes in training? I wonder if there's opportunities like that for fake villains…"

“If there is, that’d probably be the best.” Hitoshi cut in. “I mean, the point is to beat the villains at their own game, right? So *pretending* to be villains would probably be a pretty effective way to practice.”

Midoriya smiled and pulled out his phone, “Ok, let’s start there. We’ll probably need a lot more physical training too, and maybe parkour? It seems like it’ll be really useful to be able to beat villains in mobility and, uh…I kinda tried hiding on top of a display case and rolled my ankle jumping down.”

HItoshi raised an eyebrow, “Was this before or after you got beat up?”

Midoriya grimaced, “Before. And that reminds me, we should probably learn to fight.”

“Yeah.” Hitoshi nodded. “Yeah, we should probably get on that.”

Chapter End Notes

More Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X
X X X X X X X

Next Update: September 29, 2021 (MDT)

Information

Chapter Summary

Knowlege is power

Chapter Notes

Art!
PrincipalSober
MantisHead
Hollis X
Mantishead

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi crossed yet another company off their list as Izuku dialled the net number, “I think it’s time we start looking into some plan Bs.”

“Yeah.” Izuku sighed as the phone rang on speaker. “I was hoping this would work out, but it’s looking like it’s not going to.”

The phone stopped ringing and Izuku scrambled as a voice answered on the other end, “Hello, you’ve reached the Help Us Company, HUC for short. How can I help you today?”

“Um, yes, hello!” Izuku said brightly. “Your company provides civilians for hero training exercises right?”

“Yes, that would be correct.” The receptionist replied. “That’s actually the entire point of our company!”

“And do you ever provide other services,” Shinso asked. “Like villains for things like that?”

“Not normally.” the receptionist hummed. “The hero commission normally prefers to have heroes fill those roles when possible. May I know why you’re asking? You seem a little young to be hiring our services.”

“Um, yeah, a little.” Izuku grimace. “We’re looking more along the lines of employment opportunities?”

“We’re going to be trying for hero schools this next year.” Shinso clarified. “So we were hoping to volunteer as villains and get some actual combat experience.”

“That *would* give you an edge.” The receptionist said. “But unfortunately, like I said, we don’t really provide that series and even if we *did* we have an age limit of at least 16 for our employees. I…actually, there’s a possibility…let me…is it alright if I put you on hold real quick?”

“Yeah, sure?” Izuku frowned and turned to Shinso as jazzy hold music filled the room, “Well, that’s…promising?”

Shinso shrugged, “More than the other places that just politely laughed in our faces.”

Izuku nodded in agreement and was about to say something else when the hold music suddenly cut out, “Alright, are you still there?”

“Yeah. we are.” Shinso said. “What do you have for us?”

“Well, it’s not a guarantee, but our company has been contracted to be the civilians for an upcoming training exercise and I *believe* they are looking for villains as well.” The receptionist said. “However, they might also have an age requirement just like we do.”

“That’s…” Izuku hurried and reached for the notebook that Shinso was practically shoving into his hands. “That’s better than nothing. Uh, do you know where we can find out more?”

“I can give you a link.” The receptionist giggled, “I’m glad to see you two are taking the initiative, that will be really helpful when you’re heroes.”

Izuku’s jaw dropped and he looked at Shinso, who he could tell was having the exact same thought process. *When. When they were heroes.* Not if. They were going to be heroes.

After a moment too long, he shook his head, “Yes! Yes, please. Thank you so much!”

“This is your own damn fault, All Might.” Recovery Girl complained. “Seriously, what were you thinking? Cornering a young lady like that?! Honestly, I almost wish she’d done more than just blind you, because maybe then you would actually learn your lesson!”

Kyoka sat awkwardly on the examination bed in the UA nurse's office, twisting her earphones between her fingers as Yagi, no, *All Might,* stood at the eye wash station getting chewed out by the oldest hero Kyoka had ever seen. Yep. This was an adventure, alright.

"I still feel bad." Kyoka fretted. "I shouldn't have…"

"Oh no, dearie, it isn't your fault that Yagi killed all his brain cells years ago." Recovery Girl assured her. "You have absolutely nothing to be sorry for. All Might here was acting like a creep, and you responded accordingly. As far as I'm concerned, you were more of a hero in this situation than he was, do I make myself clear?"

Kyoka blinked in shock for a moment, then found herself smiling, "Yes ma'am. It's not my fault that All Might is an idiot."

All Might sputtered as Recovery Girl laughed proudly, "Oh, I like this one! You chose yourself a good successor, All Might. I'm almost tempted to say you might actually have some sense."

Kyoka frowned. What did she mean by successor *?* And earlier, right after she'd sprayed him, All Might had said she was *strong enough for his quirk,* whatever that meant. At the time, Kyoka had been a little too preoccupied with not accidentally killing the number one hero to worry too much about it, but even after things had calmed down a little bit, Kyoka was used to overhearing things that she wasn't supposed to. Overhearing people's secrets was the worst part of having a hearing quirk, but it was something she'd had to get used to so Jiro had just filed All Might's weird comment away as one of those mysteries she would never have an answer to.

Usually, however, those mysteries had nothing to do with *her,* and keeping a secret about her *from her* was decidedly less ok, "What are you talking about? I'm not All Might's *successor* . He just offered some training sessions to help me get ahead before UA. Or, at least, that's all he *told* me."

Recovery Girl shook her head and hitAll Might's knees with her cane, "You didn't tell her?! Of all the hairbrained, idiotic..."

"I was getting around to it!" All Might insisted. "If you hadn't noticed, our original meeting was interrupted!"

Jiro put her foot down, "What are you two talking about? If you're just going to argue and not actually tell me, then I'm leaving. I'm not going to waste my time sticking around with people who aren't even

willing to be honest with me."

Recovery Girl glared at All Might, who looked as contrite as he could with his eyes still somewhat swollen from the pepper spray, "We are referring to my quirk, young Jiro. It is called One for All and I would like you to inherit it."

Hitoshi stared at the screen, his jaw on teh floor as he recognized the logo, "I think the HUC receptionist forgot to mention that this was an exercise for *UA!!!"*

"No, this is even better." Midoriya nodded like he was trying to reassure himself. "This way, we can show our skills and abilities even before the entrance exam and make a more memorable first impression. We just...we just need to be such good villains that they realize they need us on *their* side. This...this'll work. This'll work."

HItoshi raised one eyebrow skeptically, "You're basically planning on scaring UA into thinking we'll become villains if we don't become heroes?"

"Well..." Midoriya smiled sheepishly. "We *are* trying to incite fear…"

"Is there an age limit?" Hitoshi leaned over to read some of the text. "There's no point in getting our hopes up and planning on this thing if they won't even let us participate."

Midoriya quickly scrolled through the page, muttering unintelligibly to himself for a minute as he read the rules, "No. Actually, there's a section for minors. We'll need to have our parents sign a waiver, just in case we get injured or something, so that'll be a challenge, but it's reasonable and they just say *minor* not a specific age, so we can definitely apply."

Hitoshi smiled, "Ok, that sounds good, what do we need to do to apply?"

"We need to send in basically a fake police file," Midoriya said. "All the information the police would have on us if we were real villains."

HItoshi's face fell, "Like our quirks."

Midoriya got a calculating look on his face, "Not necessarily. Say we train enough that I can hack into the cameras and erase footage of us, and you can make people forget you ever brainwashed them, then we

can argue that the police would reasonably remain ignorant of our quirks and…well, and even our faces and identities, if we're careful enough. We can give them just enough information to give *us* the advantage, all while studying the sports festival to make sure we know what quirks and personalities we're up against."

"Do you really think they'll allow that?" Hitoshi asked sketically.

Midoriya shrugged, "No, but I'm not sure they'll allow us to be heroes either, and we're doing it anyway."

"Touche." Hitoshi rolled his eyes. "We're gonna be heroes."

Midoriya nodded, "Villains first, but yeah. We're gonna be heroes."

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: October 6, 2021 (MDT)

Permission

Chapter Summary

Adults aren't perfect either.

Chapter Notes

Art!
MantisHead
Black Datura
mothman mothdad
Gl!tch
Julie-O

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi nervously straightened the paper again as he and Midoriya walked up to his foster home. It wasn't like the paper was that valuable. They'd just used the printer at the library to make a few copies of the permission waiver for the UA training exercise, so printing another wouldn't be a big deal or anything, but the paper felt valuable just because of what it represented. If they could both convince their parents, well, in Hitoshi's case, his *guardians,* to approve it, then they'd not only be able to practice all the strategies they were learning, but see how they matched up in a real fight against UA students. He wasn't sure how far they'd get, obviously, since the UA students would have way more training than the two of them, but Midoriya was right, it would be a good way to get their names out there and make themselves stand out from the tens of thousands of other kids who would be trying for the hero course next year.

Assuming they could actually convince their guardians to sign off on it.

He held open the door for Midoriya and waited for him to take off his shoes before leading him back into the kitchen. His foster parents *should* be home now and even though they'd be tired from work, there probably wasn't any better time to have this conversation. That didn't mean that Hitoshi wasn't tempted to turn around and run in the other

direction rather than risk getting in trouble though.

His foster dad was sitting at the table reading a newspaper as his foster mom made dinner, but neither of them saw the two of them come in. Hitoshi scuffed the floor with his heel, making just enough non-vocal noise to get his foster dad to look up from his paper. HItoshi's stomach sunk as he did a double take between HItoshi and Midoriya before his face hardened into a clearly displeased expression, "Hitoshi, you didn't tell us you'd be bringing a friend over."

"Oh, sorry!" Midoriya had an innocently guilty expression on his face. "I kinda insisted on coming over at the last minute and I was totally talking Shinso's ear off, so he didn't really have time to text you. Um, right, you're probably wondering...my name is Izuku Midoriya! You two must be Shinso's parents."

Foster Dad frowned, but looked a lot less angry than before, which made Hitoshi relax slightly. Having Midoriya take the blame for a *last minute visit* seemed like it had been a good plan, even though the truth was that they'd planned it, but his foster parents didn't really like him talking to them at all, even though he'd already tried telling them that his quirk didn't work over texting. Midoriya, however, was just energetic enough that they'd both decided he might be abe to pass it off as an accident.

"So you go to school with HItoshi?" Foster Mom asked.

"No, we met after school one day!" Midoriya replied brightly. "The kids at my own school don't really like me…"

Hitoshi caught a gleam of satisfaction in Midoriya's eyes as his foster mom frowned in pity, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that."

Midoriya shrugged, but didn't respond. To have the greatest chance of success, they needed to fit themselves into the narrative that his foster parents already believed: namely, that HItoshi was dangerous and that no one would willingly be friends with him. They would be more likely to believe Midoriya was hanging out with him because he lacked better options and it was safer than them thinking that Hitoshi was somehow manipulating, or worse *brainwashing,* him into being friends. Hence, the careful reluctance, which seemed to be working perfectly.

"So, Midoriya." Foster Dad closed his newspaper. "Are you here for dinner or…?"

“Oh!” Midoriya grabbed the paper from Hitoshi like he’d just barely remembered it. “Yes! I actually wanted to ask you guys something! I’m going to be going to this camp and I was wondering if Shinso could come along? It doesn’t cost anything, but we *do* need parental permission.”

“A camp?” Foster Dad hesitantly accepted the paper from Midoriya. “What kind of camp?”

“Well, uh…it’s kind of a training camp?” Midoriya grimaced. “You see, I kinda want to be a hero, but honestly I don’t really have a very good chance, so this is kinda to help me get a better idea of everything and see if it’s even *possible,* you know?”

Foster Dad hummed thoughtfully, but Hitoshi could tell he was still on the fence, “And you want *Hitoshi* to come with you? You know he doesn’t have a good shot at being a hero either, right?”

“I think Hitoshi can be a great hero!” Midoirya said firmly, eyes widening after a moment as he noticed his slip. “But, um, I mostly just want him there so I don’t have to be alone. It’s an entire week and we sleep there, so he wouldn’t be home for an entire week. I know that’s probably a deal breaker, but…”

“No, that’ll work.” Foster Dad said quickly, pen flourishing across the paper. “Just be careful, kid, ok?”

Hitoshi fought back a smile as Izuku grinned triumphantly, “Don’t worry, I will be!”

Kyoka blew a strand of hair out of her face, only for it to fall right back in front of her eyes. She would have just used her hand to brush it back, but both her hands were kind of busy at the moment lugging around a *broken microwave* . She’d never really been the strongest girl out there, so after less than a week of All Might’s crazy *clean the beach* routine, her arms already felt like they were about to fall off. She was sure that the extra muscle would be useful and would really help her out in the hero course, but at the same time, this whole training program seemed just kinda illogical.

It wasn’t that she was complaining. Ok, well, maybe she kinda was, but anybody would be complaining if they were asked to clean an entire polluted beach by themselves! Like, she saw the appeal of building muscle, and All Might had insisted that without enough muscle mass his quirk would blow her arms off, but there were still

some things that just weren't adding up. First of all, she wasn't even sure she *wanted* One for All. Sure, All Might and Recovery Girl had both said it was an amazing opportunity and if she'd been allowed to tell her parents she had no doubt that her dad would be pushing her to jump in with two feet, but for now, all she'd committed to doing was *train* to receive the quirk.

So far, all that meant was a *lot* of muscle training, which, again, didn't make a whole lot of sense. One for All focus don strength, obviously. Anyone who had ever seen All Might fight could see that much, but at the same time, Kyoka just couldn't bring herself to believe that's all there was to it. Quirks just weren't that simple. Take her own quirk for example. Sure, it enhanced ehr hearing, but it also allowed her to project her heartbeat, not to mention the fact that it had a mutation element to it as well. It didn't fall into a neat little category because her quirk wasn't a one trick pony and she was pretty sure that was true for most quirks. One for All shouldn't be any different.

She dumped the microwave in the truck they were using and stretched out her arms as she walked back to get another piece of garbage. All Might was a strong hero, but his go-to solution was usually to punch things, which meant that for him, the solution was always to have bigger muscles than his opponent and force his way to victory by sheer strength and force of will, but...well, as much as Kyoka hated criticizing All Might, that didn't always work. When she was singing, muscling through a difficult passage could do more harm than good. Instead of trying to get *stronger* in that case, the best thing to do was improve the technique and airflow so that she got a good quality sound without hurting herself. It was the same with her instruments. A guitar could be made of the strongest wood on earth, but if the player didn't know how to use it, it would still sound terrible. There had to be some technique elements to using One for All that she should be preparing for in addition to just building muscle.

Kyoka sighed and picked up a tire. Maybe she was just overcomplicating things. All Might seemed to be doing ok for himself and *he* only focused on muscle strength. Besides, who else was she supposed to ask? All Might had insisted that One for All was a huge secret that only a small handful knew about, so her best option was probably just to keep learning from the master and assume that All Might knew what he was doing. He *was* the expert afterall...right?

"No, Tsukauchi, I don't need either of their help. I've had One for All for decades now, I know what I'm doing!"

Kyoka paused as she heard All Might's voice filtering through the piles of trash. She wasn't quite sure where he was, but he was talking loud enough that her enhanced hearing could pick him up easily enough, even over the sound of the waves. Whoever he was talking to obviously knew about One for All, but All Might hadn't ever told her about anyone named *Tsukauchi* before.

"I'm not saying you don't, but they might still be able to help." Tsukauchi's voice was distorted in a way that meant that this was a phone call and Kyoka was tempted to walk away so she wouldn't overhear, but if All Might was going to be giving her his quirk, he didn't have any right to keep secrets about it. *"I mean, Nana got help from Gran Torino when she was training you, right?"*

"Nana only relied on Gran Torino to guide me because she knew what that monster would do to her, and to me if she left me without any guidance." All Might said coldly. *"I can handle this! I'm going to be teaching at UA as well, so I'm going to have to learn sometime. Also, Gran Torino is absolutely terrifying. Young Jiro still has a lot of work ahead of her and I don't want him traumatizing her!"*

"Well what about Nighteye." Tsukauchi asked. *"Have you even told him you found a successor?"*

There was a long moment of silence before All Might answered, *"We haven't spoken to each other in years, Tsukauchi. I doubt telling him now would go over very well."*

Kyoka shifted the tire so that it was on her shoulder and she could grab her phone with her other hand, sending herself a message with the names All Might and this Tsukashi dude had mentioned. Maybe there *were* other people she could ask for advice.

It never hurt to get a new perspective, right?

Unlike Hitoshi's foster parents, Izuku's mom actually read the whole permission slip before looking up at them worriedly, "This...this says you might get hurt baby. Are you sure you want to do this?"

"It's the best way to figure out what being a hero really is!" Izuku insisted, grateful for Hitoshi's presence at his side during this conversation. "I know that it looks really cool on tv and that every little kid wants to be a hero, but I'm not a little kid anymore. I know this exercise might be dangerous, but it's way more controlled than typical hero work! They have Recovery Girl, who's the best healing

hero working right now, and all sorts of other precautions to keep people from getting hurt in the first place. It'll give me a good sense for what the hero industry actually is and I'd really rather know *now* if it's really too dangerous for me rather than figure that out in the middle of an actual hero fight where I could get seriously injured."

"Oh…" Mom bit her lip and looked down at the paper again. "So you think this exercise will help you decide whether you can really handle being a hero?"

Even though he knew it was coming, Izuku's stomach still sank. He'd been the one to come up with the strategy of fitting their request for permission into their parents existing prejudices, but it still stung that the only way to get his mom to say yes to was to let her believe that this was the final push he needed to give up on his dream. He swallowed his nausea and forced himself to smile, "Yeah, that's basically the point of the exercise!"

Mom nodded and turned to Hitoshi, "And you're going with him?"

Hitoshi nodded, "It's safer to have someone there so we can watch each other's backs."

Mom was tense for a moment, but after it became clear that Hitoshi wasn't going to ask her a question, she relaxed and picked up the pen, "Ok, but I need you to promise to be careful, ok baby? Don't take any unnecessary risks and if there's someone you don't think you can beat, just run, ok?"

Izuku nodded and he glanced over at Hitoshi, who looked just as happy and relieved as he felt, "Don't worry. We'll make sure we can win."

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: October 13, 2021 (MDT)

Education

Chapter Summary

Kyoka makes a new friend.

Chapter Notes

Art!
existential magical girl dread

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kyoka double checked her phone again and sure enough, this seemingly abandoned apartment building was exactly where her maps app was leading her. She huffed in frustrated disappointment. It'd been hard enough to find *anything* on some old hero named *Gran Torino* , and it'd been even harder to find a current address. The internet had been pretty mucha total bust and she'd ended up just calling Recovery Girl and asking if she knew anything. That, of course, had led to an awkward conversation about how *no, All Might hadn't told her* and *yes, she was planning on reaching out anyway* , but thankfully instead of being angry at her for eavesdropping, Recovery Girl had just laughed and promised not to give away the surprise. It wasn't supposed to be a surprise, not really, Kyoka just needed some advice beyond get stronger and punch things and was hoping this Gran Torino dude would be able to help.

Well, the address Recovery Girl had given her was obviously wrong. There was no way that anyone could actually *live* here, but it left a sour taste in her mouth to just turn around and leave after she'd come all this way. She sighed and trudged up the steps. She'd knock and wait a few minutes, but when nobody answered she was just going home.

Her knocks echoed through the house, but after a moment, Kyoka heard shuffling from inside. There was actually someone in there?! She stuck her hand in her pocket and wrapped it around her pepper spray just to be safe, even though she really shouldn't be as trigger happy as she was last time, but just in case it wasn't Gran Torino who opened the door. Maybe she should have asked All Might to come

with her and introduce them…

The door opened and she had to look down to see the owner of the house because he was so old that he'd shrunk just like Recovery Girl had. He wasn't a lot to look at, just a standard old man with a stubbly beard and a big flannel shirt who probably ate too many tv dinners, but he glared up at her while holding his cane in a way that make it very clear that she was one wrong move away from losing her kneecaps, "Who are you? Are you selling cookies?"

Kyoka blinked, "What? No!"

"Shame." The man let out a disgruntled noise. "So why are you here then?"

"Well, I'd like to ask you a few questions, actually." Kyoka said. "Assuming you're actually the guy I'm looking for."

"Oh yeah?" He gave her an appraising look. "And who is that?"

"Gran Torino." Kyoka smile when his eyes widened. "That's you, right? Recovery Girl told me I was looking for a crotchety old man."

Gran Torino guffawed loudly, "Oh, is that what she told you? Well, it takes one to know one, that's for sure. And why would you be looking for a *crotchety old man* like me?"

"I was hoping you'd be able to offer some more insight about a secret All Might told me." Kyoka said cryptically. "What do you know about One for All?"

Izuku and Hitoshi let the psychological thriller they were watching play in the background as they watched clips of last year's sports festival on Izuku's laptop. They each had notebooks open right next to them with the name of the student they were currently analyzing, which at the moment was a second year named *Tamaki Amajiki* .

"His quirk is so interesting!" Izuku gushed. "Depending on the combination, he could probably imitate almost any quirk….does it work on inorganic materials? Like, if he ate a piece of a balloon, could he float. Actually, that wouldn't really work, but maybe if he inhaled helium…"

"I think it's safe to assume that most of what he manifests is actually food." Hitoshi pointed out. "It's weird finding somebody so shy in the

hero course though. He'll most likely try to stick to a supporting role, but if we can force him into the spotlight, his anxiety is bound to give us the advantage, especially if we can isolate him from those two other kids he always sits with at the end of his fights. They're his support system, so remove them…"

Izuku grinned, "And he just might crumble. Controlling what he eats is a little harder, especially since we obviously don't want to just starve him or anything, and will only become relevant if it ends up being beneficial to capture him, but…I can do some research into some plants or things that won't give him any useful traits. Maybe corn? It doesn't have vines, so it'll be harder to weaponize."

"Getting hit with corn cobs is still gonna hurt." Hitoshi pointed out. "But yeah, not really as scary as a blackberry bush wrapping around you or, like, a bull's horns or something."

"Yeah." Izuku wrote himself a note for later. "I think I've got an ok idea of his quirk now, what about you? Do you have a clear picture of his personality?"

Hitoshi raised an eyebrow, "I've been picking apart people's brains since I was four, Izuku. You have to know what makes a person tick to make them talk."

Izuku grinned and flipped to the next page, "Ok then, who's next? How about….Mirio Togata?"

Hitoshi shrugged, "Sounds good to me."

Gran Torino grabbed Kyoka by the arm and dragged her inside, slamming the door behind her, "What did you just say?"

He was a lot faster than she was expecting and a lot stronger too. Kyoka winced and rubbed at her arm as soon as he let her go, "I said, I wanted to know more about One for All."

Gran Torino just glared at her suspiciously, "And how do you even know about it."

"All Might told me." Kyoka steadily returned his glare. "He said he wants me to inherit it, but at the same time, I know there's something he's not telling me. If I'm going to let somebody else give me a quirk, I'd like to know what I'm getting into."

Gran Torino frowned and pulled out his phone, but he was no longer staring daggers at her, so that was an improvement. He still gave her a suspicious glance as he held the phone up to his ear, though.

Kyoka's eyes widened when All Might answered the phone, "G-gran Torino? What...to what do I owe the pleasure? I, um, I wasn't expecting a call from you today."

"I have a girl here who says she's your successor." Gran Torino said. "Purple hair, more attitude than Nana had at your age, sound familiar? If she's your successor, why the hell aren't you here with her?!"

Jiro heard a hacking cough on the other end of the phone and grimaced as she realized All Might was spitting up blood again. That was her bad, "Uh, I didn't actually tell him I was coming. I overheard him talking about you with some guy named Tsukauchi and just thought you might be able to help me."

Gran Torino blinked at her for a moment as All Might spluttered excuses before he took a deep breath and yelled into the phone, "That's even worse, you nincompoop! Were you really so sparse on the details that this girl had to go out of her way to find somebody to give her some answers? You know what? She seems like a nice girl and I'm glad you found somebody with a lick of sense at least, so I'll help you out and answer her questions, ok? But you owe me a full box of taiyaki, got it?

"Y-yes sir." All Might spluttered. "Of course! Thank you!"

Gran Torino hung up the phone as Jiro looked at him in shock, "Alright kid, now what's your name?"

"Uh...Kyoka Jiro." Kyoka said. "Sir?"

Gran Torino just rolled his eyes, "Just call me Gran. All Might only bothers with that *sir* stuff because I had to beat some sense into him when he was younger. Now what all did that All American Peacock tell you about One for All?"

"Well, he told me that it's a quirk that gets passed down and that it'll make me stronger." Jiro started. "But it's not really the quirk itself that I have questions about, my problem is more, like, about the training? All Might told me that if I don't have enough muscle mass when I accept it, it'll blow my arms off, which we obviously don't want to have happen, right? But, like, I get that it's a lot of power, but

muscle mass can't be the only way to harness it. Muscle takes a lot of time to build and showing up to the entrance exam with a new quirk that I've never used before just sounds like a recipe for disaster to me."

Gran stared at her with an unreadable expression for a long moment before pulling out his phone again, "You told her she couldn't receive it until *when?!"*

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: October 20, 2021 (MDT)

Rumors

Chapter Summary

Rumor has it...

Chapter Notes

Art!
trauma™ X
existential magical girl dread
Gl!tch

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I just wish Katsuki would leave me alone.” Izuku groaned as Hitoshi helped him bandage yet another burn. “It’s like the more I work on stealth, the more he thinks I’m just ignoring him or looking down on him. I can avoid him for a while, but…”

“But that just makes it worse when he finally catches you.” Hitoshi nodded. “Yeah, my bullies are the same way. I wonder…”

Izuku looked up, “Do you have a way to stop it?”

HItoshi shrugged, “Maybe. Remember when we first met and all my bullies thought you were some kind of villain back up coming to help me?”

Izuku nodded, “It made them run away.”

“And they stopped bothering me at school for a few weeks.” Hitoshi added. “So, what would happen if we do that again, but, like intentionally this time. I tell my bullies you’re scarier than I am and you tell yours that I’m scarier than you are, so they leave us both alone so the other one doesn't get angry or whatever. Think that would work.”

“Maybe not on Kacchan, but it’s still worth it to get rid of everyone else.” Izuku muttered thoughtfully. “If we can start the right rumors…”

Hitoshi smiled, “Then maybe we can finally get some peace.”

Toshinori had had nightmares like this. Him, sitting in the principals office like a scolded child while Gran Torino had tea with Nedzu. He shivered. At least they weren’t *training.*

“I agree with you that waiting until the entrance exam is risky.” Nedzu said. “But receiving One for All too early also has it’s own risks.”

“Well, yeah.” Gran Torino shrugged. “It’s a centuries old quirk with way too much power for a single person, that’s a no brainer.”

Toshinori cleared his throat, “I was having her wait until she was going to enter UA not only to give her time to gain enough muscle, but also because she’d be able to freely access UA’s resources, for example recovery girl, if she did get injured.”

Gran Torino gave him a withering look, “You can just call her you know.”

“Well yes.” Toshinori blushed. “But it would take time to get to her and in the case of a critical injury…”

“It would be safest for the majority of quirk training to happen on UA grounds, where Recovery Girl’s services would be immediately available.” Nedzu nodded. “If that is the major concern then I believe that I might have a solution. We have a training exercise coming up where we will be pitting our students against civilians acting as villains. This gives them an opportunity to test their abilities against a wide variety of skill sets and allows them to see what fighting actual villains will be like on a daily basis, since most of the individuals they fight will not be S-class threats. We have a third party coming in as the civilians, however, if your successor were to participate as a villain, it would give her the chance to get to know One for All in an environment where medical services are readily available, as well as Eraserhead, just in case we need to cancel the quirk in the case of an emergency. How does that sound?”

“It sounds perfect!” Gran Torino exclaimed. “Why didn’t you lead with that?”

“It, uh…” Toshinori sighed. “I still think it would be better to wait, but if you both think it’s a good idea then I…well, I suppose that it’s the best course of action. I just want her to have the best chance at

success as we can give her."

"Perfect!" Nedzu said. "Then I'll draft the necessary paperwork for you to give to her. This is going to be so exciting!"

Izuku glanced over to make sure Katsuki was watching as he waved goodbye to Hitoshi, "See you later!"

"Yeah, sure." Hitoshi lowered his voice. "You sure you want to do this?"

"Yes." Izuku said firmly. "He needs to know you're dangerous."

Hitoshi nodded and took control as he walked away. Izuku's brain fogged over and he lost control of his body, but he could still remember the plan. Seeing him like this would make Katsuki angry because he'd automatically assume that Izuku was ignoring him, not that he was brainwashed. He'd hit Izuku, like he always did, which would break the brainwashing, and from there it was just making sure he came to the right conclusions. Simple.

"Oi, Deku, who the hell was that?" Katsuki came storming up to him, just like Izuku knew he would, his lackeys trailing a few feet behind. "Well, who was that purple eye bag idiot, huh?"

Izuku didn't respond.

"Are you ignoring me?" Katsuki looked like he was about to burst a blood vessel. "I'm right here, you damn nerd, answer me! Who was that?!"

Again, Izuku said nothing, obviously because he couldn't, and Katsuki did exactly what he wanted him to. He punched him right in the face.

"Stop ignoring me!" Katuski yelled. "You idiot! When I ask a question, you answer! Got it?"

Izuku sniffled, "Thank you, Kacchan!"

Katsuki stopped, "What?"

"Well, Shinso forgot to deactivate his quirk when he left, so I couldn't actually respond to anything." Izuku rambled. "He's got this super awesome brainwashing quirk and it's really cool!"

Katsuki's lackeys looked absolutely horrified and Izuku fought to keep

a smile off his face. It wouldn't be long before the entire school knew about the quirkless kid's "villain" friend who would brainwash them into submission if they made one wrong move. Now, it was just making sure Katsuki believed that Izuku wasn't ignoring him intentionally.

"But, well, um," Izuku continued, "it's just that sometimes we're experimenting with his quirk and he just forgets to deactivate it and so if it looks like I'm ignoring you, I'm really not, I just...might not be able to respond? I'm sorry, Kacchan, I really am!"

There was a long moment before Katsuki scoffed, "Of course you'd be too weak to save yourself from some extra's quirk, Deku. Of course only a brainwasher would hang out with a useless deku like you."

He stalked away, his lackeys following with one last glance over their shoulders and Izuku melted in relief, "You can come out now, they're gone."

Hitoshi rounded the corner, glaring in the direction Katsuki had walked, "Are you sure you don't want me to brainwash him into doing something embarrassing?"

Izuku shook his head, "The important thing is that he leaves me alone and now that we've thrown some doubt onto his theory that I'm intentionally ignoring him, it'll be a while before he finds something else to be mad at. Thank you so much, HItoshi."

Hitoshi shrugged, "It's whatever. Do you have the notebook I asked for?"

Izuku nodded and dug around in his backpack before handing it to him, "This will be enough, right?"

Hitoshi smirked as he flipped through the pages, "Oh, this will be more than enough. This is gonna be great."

Hitoshi usually didn't intentionally go where his bullies hung out, but today was an exception. He had the notebook bent and stuffed into his pocket, ready to fall out the minute things got physical. Now to get his bullies to take the bait.

"Hey, villain, get outta here!"

Hitoshi bit back a smile as his bullies saw him, he just continued on

like he didn't hear him, but he was walking slowly enough it didn't take much time for them to catch up.

"What are you doing here, *brainwasher?* " the ringleader spat. "Are you looking for a beating?"

Hitoshi just looked at the floor and kept walking until the ringleader shoved him, making him stumble just hard enough to knock Izuku's notebook to the floor. Bingo.

He was shoved against the wall as the ringleader kept shouting some nonsense or other at him, but that wasn't the guy he was most interested in. No, that was the one who had just picked up the notebook and was flipping through it, mild terror growing more intense with every page, "Um, guys...I think you need to see this."

The ringleader let go of HItoshi as the whole group huddled around the notebook, "What the fuck. Is this about us?! Did you make this you damn villain?!"

"No." HItoshi answered honestly. "My friend Midoriya did. I didn't tell him that much about you, but he managed to find out where I lived after only meeting me once, so I'm sure there's more in there. I haven't read it yet, sorry."

The ringleader's eyes widened and he shoved the notebook at one of the other bullies, "You. you've got a fire quirk. Burn it." He turned to Hitoshi. "You keep that freak away from us, you hear?"

"I'm sorry," Hitoshi said with false sincerity, "but I can't control him."

The ringleader went pale, "You...but you're a brainwasher! You can't…"

Hitoshi shrugged, "I don't want to get on his bad side, and I'm sure you don't either. Well, see you at school!"

He walked away as the bullies trembled behind him and couldn't hold back a small smile. School was going to be a lot more enjoyable after this.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: October 27, 2021 (MDT)

Fashion

Chapter Summary

New outfits!

Chapter Notes

Art!
MantisHead
Julie-o

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kyoka had never been one to chase hero fights. She'd watch them if she saw one on her way home from school, but she'd had far too many nightmares about hearing someone call out for help from under the rubble and the hero fighting couldn't hear them. She always woke up feeling helpless, which was part of the reason she wanted to be a hero in the first place. She hated the idea of hearing someone call out for help and not being able to do anything about it.

So no, she didn't make a habit of watching hero fights, but she also didn't make a habit out of leaping in headfirst before she looked, so she'd been trying to watch as many of All Might's fights as she could ever since he had offered her One for All. She knew that she could always catch the recordings on the news later, but it was just *different* in person. She couldn't really listen to a recording, not in the same way. The poor quality mics that the news stations used would never have been able to pick up the subtle um of energy surrounding All Might as he resolved a hostage situation.

Kyoka closed her eyes and focused on the steady buzz of energy, straining her ears to sort it out from the sounds of the crowd and the fight. One for All sounded almost electric, but the part that had surprised her the most wasn't that it had sound, it was the fact that it was almost harmonic. It made sense, since each holder in the past had contributed their energy to the quirk, but the subtle way that they interweaved was weirdly haunting. She just wished she could actually *listen.*

Whenever All Might was fighting, it was too loud to really enjoy the

depth of the sound. She could still hear One for All when All Might was in his smaller form, now that she knew what to look for, but it was quieter and almost nonexistent, so she couldn't really hear it. She was curious about how it would sound when she actually *got* the quirk. Hopefully she'd at least have a bit more time to listen then.

The crowd surged and someone was pushed into her from behind. Whoever it was ended up dropping a notebook in front of her and she extended her earphone jacks to catch it before it hit the ground. She grabbed the notebook and looked around, "Um..who…"

"Uh, mine, sorry!" A boy around her age brushed his green hair out of his face and grimaced. "Sorry, I was trying to get closer and…"

He trailed off as his eyes caught on something in the fight and before she could say anything else, he had snatched his notebook from her hands and was already shouldering his way through to the front. Kyoka looked through the crowd after him, her eyes widening when she realized that All Might was starting to steam and the hum of One for All was taking on a strained quality. He needed to get out of there.

Thankfully, another hero leapt into action and Kyoka breathed a sigh of relief as All Might was able to slip away. She frowned as she thought of the boy. Had he...had he realized the fight was almost over? She sighed and shrugged it off. It was weird, but probably not that important in the grand scheme of things. The crowd was starting to clear out and Kyoka ducked inside the mall to get away from all the people and the noise. She wasn't in any rush and All Might obviously wouldn't be up for any training right now, so maybe she could just window shop and kill time while she waited for the crowds from the fight to go away. Kyoka started walking toward one of her favorite stores that sold the kind of alternative style clothing that she liked to wear. She could use a new pair of pants anyway.

"Hitoshi…" Izuku said hopelessly. "I think we're lost."

"Hitoshi raised an eyebrow, "Physically or metaphorically? Because I think both apply."

Izuku swallowed. "I know *darkwear* sounded like a good idea when we saw it on the map, but I have no idea where to even start"

"Pants." A voice said behind them. "Or maybe skirts if that's more your style."

Shinso whirled around to see a girl their age with what looked like headphone jacks hanging from her ears looking at them in amusement. “No, we’re trying to prioritize freedom of movement. So pants will be fine.”

Izuku’s eyes widened, “You’re that girl I saw earlier! You were watching All Might’s fight!”

“And you’re the one that ran into me.” She shrugged and her earphones mimicked the movement.

Izuku immediately started mumbling, “Those aren’t just *hanging* from her ears, they *are* her ears, which means it’s part of her quirk. That’s so cool! It must come with advanced hearing and...

Hitoshi dug an elbow into his ribs before he could start muttering full force, “Izuku, we’re not trying to scare this one off.”

Izuku blushed, “Sorry…”

The girl shrugged again, “Whatever. You were right about the enhanced hearing, so I’m used to tuning things out.”

“I’m sorry.” Izuku mumbled, blushing deeper. “That must get really annoying.”

“Again, I’m used to it.” The girl said. “My name is Jiro, by the way.”

“I”m Shinso.” Hitoshi said. “And this chatterbox is Midoriya.”

Jiro nodded, “So what led to this complete overhaul in style? Did your girlfriends break up with you or something?”

Hitoshi didn’t know why he ended up blushing at that, but hopefully it wasn’t too noticeable, “No, it’s uh, it’s kind of hard to explain.”

“Hey, I’m not here to judge.” Jiro rolled her eyes. “I’m also not here to help, but you two were wandering around like lost little puppies and it was kinda obvious that you were desperate.”

“Thanks.” Hitoshi said dryly.

Jiro smiled for the first time since they’d met her, “No problem. I’m gonna be a hero, so helping those who can’t help themselves is kinda in the job description.”

Hitoshi gave her a tired glare as Izuku latched onto what she’d just

said, “You're going to be a hero?! Us too! That’ s really kind of why we’re here. We’re trying to get some combat experience, so we’re doing this thing where we're pretending to be, like, fake villains, kind of? To help hero students in training!”

Jiro shook her head, “You do realize how fake that sounds, right? If I wasn’t participating in the exact same exercise I'd be tempted to think you two were looking for vigilante gear.”

“Wait, you’re doing the same exercise?” Hitoshi gave her a skeptical look. “At UA?”

“No, at Shiketsu.” Jiro scoffed. “Of course at UA. no other school would be crazy enough to put on an exercise like that.”

“True.” Hitoshi hummed. “So are you looking for an outfit for the exercise too?”

“no , I was just planning on throwing together some junk from my closets. Jiro shrugged. " I dress like this every day.”

“So what you're saying is that you’re the perfect person to help us.” Izuku grinned. “You’re already familiar with the exercise and you said it yourself, this is your aesthetic. So...we start with pants right? We want something with a lot of pockets, if we can.”

“Hm...I think I saw a couple pairs over here.” Jiro started leading them to another section of the store. “You’ll want to stick with blacks and greys, obviously, since I’m guessing you’re wanting to blend in with the cityscape.”

“Exactly.” Hitoshi said. “But we also want to be memorable if we *are* seen.”

“So maybe a pop of color.” Jiro said thoughtfully. “And you’ll want to look stronger than you are, which means a looser cut around your arms and legs to hide those noodles you two have going on.”

“Hey!” Hitoshi cried indignantly. “We’ve been working out!”

Jiro shot him an amused look, “Obviously not enough.”

“I mean, she is kind of right.” Izuku grimaced. “We are mostly planning to rely on strategy and intelligence, rather than brute strength.”

“Well, at least you’ve got a brain.” Jiro shrugged. “That's more than some heroes I can mention. These pants look like they’ll be alright.”

Things were a lot less confusing with Jiro helping them and HItoshi found himself enjoying her snarky commentary as she helped them sort through the different options. A lot of items, like armored shirts and sturdy boots, they realized they were going to have to buy somewhere else, like an army surplus store, but they at least got a good start on their villain look. The worst part though was buying the jackets.

“This is not a jacket.” Hitoshi deadpanned, holding up the offensive article of clothing. “This is a crop top.”

“Yeah, but it’s what’s in style.” Jiro snickered. “What? You don’t want to show the world your nonexistent abs?”

“Ha ha, very funny.” Hitoshi rolled his eyes. “It just doesn’t seem very practical.”

“We’ll be wearing armored shirts underneath.” Izuku argued. “And the shorter cut *will* allow for more freedom of movement. Plus the longer version is three times more expensive, so…”

“So we’re getting crop top jackets.” Hitoshi sighed. “Joy. I’m getting the one with the purple trim. Izuku, you get the one with green. It’s naptime.”

“You’re ridiculous.” Jiro said. “But good luck with the exercise. Not sure if we’re competing against each other or just with the hero students, but either way, good luck. Maybe we’ll get pitted against the same group of students.”

Hioshi found himself smiling, “Yeah, that’d be fun. You can recognize us by our crop tops.”

“Oh, you’ll look great.” Jiro smiled. “I’d better be going. See you later.”

Hitoshi waved to her as Izuku gathered everything to take up to the register, “bye.”

Nedzu grinned as his employees started scanning through the list of names they needed to clear and approve files for before the exercise began. It was mostly a formality, since all of these applicants had

already had to pass a basic background check to get this far and the vast majority had either participated in the exercise in previous years or had come recommended by a pro hero with a few notable exceptions. Nedzu was curious what his staff would think of their volunteers this year. They had a good mix of skill levels, not to mention the fact that All Might's new successor would be participating, so no matter what, it was bound to be an interesting exercise.

"Most of these are repeats, so they already know what's up." Snipe said after a long pause. "Major thing is just to make sure they don't get pitted against the same students."

"We'll also have to skim over their files to make sure they're not trying to slip anything through." Aizawa pointed out. "But yes, they already know the rules, so their files won't need as much work."

"There's some fresh blood here too." Midnight hummed. "We've got a few younger applicants, actually. Ooh! There's even a few middle schoolers! Cute little babies."

"A few?" All Might blinked in surprise. "I thought there was only one."

"There's actually four." Nedzu gave an excited little chirp. "How about we start with them, since you find them so interesting?"

"That sounds wonderful." Recovery Girl said. "Who's first?"

"This Kaminari kid…" Cementoss pointed to the name. "That's Electras kid, right?"

"Yes." Nedzu said. "And if you'll look, you'll see that she is participating as well."

"I think I remember hearing that she takes each of her kids on a special trip every year, just to help with work life balance, what with her being a pro-hero who takes a lot of overseas missions." Thirteen said. "It's sweet."

"If this is a family bonding activity, then the kid must be trying to be a hero." Aizawa said. "He's the right age to be applying to UA."

"That he is." Nedzu nodded. He was always so proud of his teachers when they caught onto something small like that, even if it *was* painfully obvious once one had all the necessary information. It was

entertaining watching them grow. “And he and his mother seem to be planning on working in a team, so I’ll let you take a look at both files.”

He started passing around copies of the files the Kaminaris had sent in. They were very convincing files, obviously, since Elelctra had seen more police files than the average person, and had all the information on their quirks and fighting style that one would see in the files that was usually given to heroes at the start of a mission, exactly as they wanted it.

Aizawa gave the files a once over for less than a minute before shutting them and pushing them away, “Electra knows what she’s doing. Let’s stop wasting time and move onto the next one.”

“That’d be Kyoka Jiro, isn’t that right?” Recovery Girl piped up. “Gran Torino suggested she do the exercise.”

“I haven’t heard from that old geezer in forever.” Snipe laughed. “How’s he doing?”

“Maybe I’d know if he called more often.” Recovery Girl griped. “That old man likes to pretend he has dementia, but from how often he forgets that other people exist, you’d think he actually did.”

“Well, let’s hope he didn’t forget to help her with her file.” Aizawa said, reaching out for Jiro’s file.

“She’s got a pretty rockin’ mugshot.” Present Mic said. “And a quirk that enhances her hearing will make for an interesting challenge for our kiddos, that’s for sure.”

Nedzu watched All Might squirm in his seat as his new coworkers essentially passed judgement on his successor without him being able to acknowledge her as such. If he insisted on keeping one for all a secret, then he would have to get used to situations like this, and ones that were even more odd and uncomfortable once she started showing signs of her new quirk. Nedzu didn’t know why he hadn’t thought of having All Might’s successor participate in this exercise earlier. It would be a nice test run to see how the quirk affected her and by the time school started, he’d be prepared with a nice cup of tea and a list of suggestions for improvement. It was perfect!

“Well, we’ll have to have her make a few minor changes.” Thirteen said. “But it mostly looks good. You said we have two other kiddos their age, right?”

“Ah yes, Izuku Midoiriya and Hitoshi Shinso.” Nezu grinned and pulled out the file, passing copies around the table. The file was suspiciously thin, something that did not go unnoticed by his staff.

Mic accepted the file with a confused look, “Is this it? Which of the two is this one for?”

“Both.” Nedzu said. “They always work as a team, so one file is sufficient.”

“I wouldn’t describe *this* as sufficient.” Aizawa said dryly.

“There isn’t even a mugshot!” Midnight said. “How are they supposed to be villains without mugshots?!”

“There *is* a photo…” Snipe pointed out hesitantly. “It looks like security footage, but still…”

“There’s none of their actual faces though.” Cementoss said. “They’re wearing masks in that one.”

“That is because they have never been arrested.” Nedzu said. “Or so they claim. What little they did put in the file says that they specialize in stealth and that one of the two has experience with hacking, so they are rarely, if ever caught on camera, and never out of costume.”

“It’s a bold claim.” Ectoplasm said. “It might put our students at a disadvantage.”

“But they’re going to get cases with hardly any info once they graduate.” Aizawa groaned. “We’re going to let them keep their mystery file, aren’t we?”

“As you would say, it’s only logical.” Nedzu chirped happily. “Although if the rest of you do not agree, we *can* insist they add more information to it.”

“They had to identify themselves and their quirks to submit, right?” Mic asked. “What powers do they have?”

“Hitoshi Shinso has a brainwashing quirk.” Nedzu said. “Which is part of the evidence the two cited for how they had never been arrested. Izuku Midoriya is quirkless.”

The room went quiet.

After a long moment, Midnight spoke up, “I say let it stand.”

“Yes.” Thirteen nodded. “I hate to say it, but those kids are going to need every advantage we can give them.”

“Plus, it’s not as if they’ll be able to keep themselves hidden for long.” Ectoplasm said. “Our students are smart, they’ll figure out Shinso’s quirk the first time he uses it.”

“Yeah.” Snipe agreed. “It’s just like Aizawa said. It’ll be good for them to practice filling out sparse villain files, but their advantage won’t last more than a day or two, assuming they stay in the exercise that long.”

“Which isn’t very likely.” Aizawa sighed. “They might surprise us, but I’m not counting on it. Whatever, the point is to have a wide variety of skill levels. The students need some easy take-downs if they’re going to be fighting the likes of Electra as well.”

“So we’ll put them fighting the same group.” Cementoss said. “May as well throw in the other middle schooler too. Maybe they’ll be able to make some friends.”

“We should pit them against the second years, just for a good balance.” Midnight added. “The third years would crush those kids in a heartbeat and the first years don’t do the exercise.”

“Then it’s decided.” Nedzu clapped his paws together. “Those four will all face off against our second year students in the exercise!”

Yes, this year was going to be interesting indeed.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: November 3, 2021 (MDT)

Exercise

Chapter Summary

The UA exercise begins!

Chapter Notes

Art!
DustInTheBreeze

Memes!
X X X

Might suggested, but at the end of the day, Gran's vision of what training for One for All should look like meshed a lot better with her fighting style than All Might's point and hit strategy. The last few weeks had been spent cleaning the beach like they had originally planned, but also meditating, studying, and listening to One for All as often as she could so that she was ready for today.

"This is a great responsibility, young Jiro." All Might said solemnly. "A sacred torch that has been passed down for generations."

Recovery Girl hit All MIght in the knees with her cane. "Don't scare her off before she's even gotten the quirk, you nitwit!"

"It *is* a sacred responsibility." Gran Troino acknowledged. "But at the end of the day, I've known the holders of this quirk for decades and it has been passed through some of the greatest heroes I know. Try to welcome it like an old friend, if you can."

Kyoka swallowed dryly and nodded, "Ok, I'm ready."

All Might smiled and plucked a hair from his head, "Eat this!"

//

Izuku swallowed as he stared up at the massive gates of ua, "We...were finally here."

"Yeah." Hitoshi breathed. "And soon we're gonna be back as students."

They were both dressed in the villain outfits they'd bought and Izuku was floored by how well everything had come together. They'd found armored shirts that were meant for people with destructive quirks so they had at least some measure of protection, but they'd also found a lot of other things, like climbing harnesses that would allow them to rappel down buildings or hide up off the ground in a pinch. For two bullied kids, Hitoshi thought they looked pretty cool.

Izuku nodded in awe, "I know we've been preparing for this for weeks now, but still, it doesn't…"

"Feel real?" Hitoshi chuckled, "Yeah, I get it. But we've got all your plans and we're ready for this, aren't we?"

Izuku's depression hardened in determination, "Right. We're ready. Let's do this."

The entire school was basically a maze and if the two of them hadn't spent the last week studying every last resource they could find on both UA and the heroes vs. villains exercise, Hitoshi wasn't sure they would have been able to find the auditorium at all. As it was, they just barely avoided taking a few wrong turns and arrived at the auditorium to find it almost empty with the exception of a few other fake villains wandering around in small groups and picking their seats. A few looked over at them as they came in, and Hitoshi made a note of who kept them in the corner of their eye after looking away. They'd have to watch out for those ones.

Hitoshi didn't pay them too much mind, however, considering that his eyes were immediately drawn to the girl sitting by herself about halfway toward the back of the room.

Izuku smiled as he recognized her too, "Jiro! You made it!"

She jumped at Izuku's shout, her earphones twitching slightly before she relaxed and gave them a cocky grin "Hey, what a nice surprise. I thought you two would have gotten lost before you made it to the front gate."

Hitoshi rolled his eyes, "Very funny. What about you? This place is like a maze. How did you find this room?"

"You must have been a part of the exercise before, right?" Izuku asked. "That's how you knew where to go!"

"Nah, nothing that fancy." Jiro shook her head. "I was hanging out with my mentor before this and he walked me down."

Izuku's eyes widened hugrily, "Mentor? Who…?"

"Your outfits look good." Jiro interrupted. "I guess you ended up finding all the pieces you needed to finish them."

"Oh, uh, yeah. And more, honestly…" Hitoshi glanced down at his outfit. "Is that your villain outfit? Or is it just what you pulled out of your closet this morning?"

"Meh," Jiro shrugged, "it's a little bit of both, not gonna lie."

She was wearing baggy cargo pants, just like he and Izuku were, but she'd paired hers with combat boots that laced all the way up above her knees and a variety of belts hanging around her waist. Up top

she'd paired a dark grey tank top with a black half-shirt that was basically just sleeves with a high neckline to keep it in place.

In short, she looked like a badass and Hitoshi had to turn away so he wouldn't stare too long, "Well, uh, it looks alright for something you just threw together last minute."

"We should probably go sit down…" Izuku said, pointing to the crowds of people wandering in, small groups being led by various pro-heroes who must have found them wandering around the halls of UA, "It looks like they're starting to round up the stragglers."

Jiro gave them a questioning look and Hitoshi rushed to explain, "Izuku wanted to sit in the back so we could watch everyone come in. The people who got here before us either did the exercise in previous years or did a lot of research just like we did."

"They're wild cards." Izuku added. "They're probably not as useful as allies as the people who showed up without getting lost, but they could also cause problems we're not expecting *because* they're less prepared. I wanna see what we're working with."

"While simultaneously hiding your own strength and weaknesses behind those masks of yours." Jiro nodded. "Smart, but unnecessary. We're fighting the heroes, not these guys."

Izuku shook his head, "That's what they want you to think, but really, they've written the rules to make this just as much of a competition between the villains as it is a fight between the villains as it is a fight against the heroes."

"It enhances the realism of the scenario. In real life, there's just as much infighting as there is conflict between heroes and villains. Maybe even more." Hitoshi explained. "So yeah. Once we get in there, it's kinda every man for himself."

Jiro smirked, "So what I'm hearing is that there's no hard feelings if I stab you two in the back?"

"Of course not." Hitoshi smiled. "Because we'll be the ones stabbing you in the back first."

Jiro gave him a look, "Go, do your creepy retcon or whatever, I'll see you in the arena."

Hitoshi lowered his voice and leaned in closer, "Not if we're doing our

jobs right."

"Hitoshi, we gotta go." Izuku's eyes darted around and Hitoshi realized he'd already taken out his notebook and his hands were twitching like he was already trying to write all the thoughts and observations running through his head. "Oh yeah, uh, catch you later jiro Good luck."

Jiro nodded. "Right back at ya."

The two of them silently made either way toward the back of the auditorium melting into the shadows as much as they could. Those of the new people who *did* see them either stared or immediately looked away, which meant that their plan to be intimidating, or at the very least mysterious, was working well. As soon as they sat down, Izuku's pen immediately started flying across the pages of his notebook and Hitoshi got his out more slowly, but he was still mentally filing away how the other fake villains interacted with each other and what personality traits they could exploit later, if they really needed to. The villains were definitely at a disadvantage in this exercise, but Izuku and he had lived their entire lives at a disadvantage so really, they were right in their comfort zone. And they were about to show everyone what they could do.

Denki eyed the two guys in combat gear and swallowed, yeah, he was definitely going to be steering clear of those guys. Mom grinned as she elbowed him in the ribs, "What do you think Sparky? Isn't this gonna be fun?"

Denki gave a bright smile, "Yeah! It's gonna be great! His smile fell the moment that Mom looked away. It wasn't that he wasn't excited. It *was* going to be a lot of fun, but he was also kinda starting to freak out. Mom knew he wanted to be a hero , but she wasn't around a lot, so it had been a while since she'd actually seen him fight. He had to be good at combat though, because that would be his only saving grace if he somehow bombed the academic portion of the UA entrance exam.

He knew that there were other schools that might take him, obviously, but Mom had been so proud when he'd said that he was shooting for UA and he just...he didn't want to disappoint her. Or himself, honestly. He'd be pretty bummed if he didn't make it in. Present Mic walked up onto the stage and Denki couldn't help grinning. He'd been the one and found him and mom when they'd gotten lost on the way

to the auditorium. It had been long enough since she'd gone here that either they'd remodeled or she'd just forgotten her way around either was a possibility but Denki had been terrified that they were going to be late when Present Mic had finally found them wandering around the third floor and lead them and a whole lunch of others here just in time. He'd laughed and joked with them and the others they'd found for the entire time, so yeah, Denki was pretty sure he'd just discovered a new favorite hero.

"Hello there listeners!" Mic yelled. "Welcome to our annual heroes vs. villains exercise at UA High School! Even though all of you are good people and some of you are even pro heroes IRL, this week, you get to embrace your dark side and become heroes to our students by playing the villains!!!"

There was an awkward pause and Denki was fairly certain they were supposed to cheer, but it was too late now, so ...Denki just cheered emotionally and hoped it counted for something somehow.

"Love the enthusiasm." Mic grumbled. "Alright let's get back to it! The villains in this exercise, that's you, are trying to achieve objectives. You should have gotten a list of these bad boys in the big stack of paperwork we gave you when your applications were approved. They're gonna be things like steal this painting, kidnap this victim, you know, typically crimes that our students are gonna come across in the field. For each objective that you manage to hold onto for the whole week and escape with at the end, you'll get some cold hard cash so try to go home with as many as possible. Just to keep things interesting you have to actually leave the city on the last day, though. No just stashing your objectives somewhere and raking in the cash, that doesn't count."

Denki wasn't here for the money, but he wouldn't deny it would be nice to have a little extra cash. Mom made a good amount, obviously, but it was always different spending money that he'd earned himself and he wanted to help pay for UA somehow. Assuming he actually got in. That meant, though, that they were up against a lot of guys who were only in it for the money and would do what was necessary to get it. So that would be interesting.

"The heroes goal is to stop you." Present Mic continued. "But that doesn't mean that they don't have other objectives too! They've got a list just like yours of things they can do for extra credit points, but this is things like finding lost children or doing a press interview. You know typical hero stuff! Now onto the fun part. Your weapons you

weren't allowed to bring any in with you, except for your quirk obviously, but there will be some available inside the arena itself, it might require a little bit of work to get them. All of these are nonlethal paint rounds even if the knives have a special coating that will rub off to show a hit. So don't worry about that when picking your weapons. You and the hero students will both have coms that link to the staff here at UA, so we'll make the call for how much damage is lethal. Once you're dead you're out of the game, obviously, but we do have very rooms so it's not gonna be too boring for you. Same if the heroes arrest you but there's a grace period there. You'll have 24 hours to escape before getting turned over to the teachers, so you better work quick ya dig?"

Denki frowned. The heroes weren't supposed to kill people, were they?

"Alright, that's the big stuff out of the way." Present mic grinned. "Once we get into the city, you'll have until noon until the heroes get here so if you have anything you don't wanna get caught doing, get it done quickly. Remember though that you're not allowed to actually *grab* any of the objectives until the heroes are actually inside the city, ya got it?"

There was a quiet grumble of assent and Present Mic grinned, "Alright then, follow us to the buses and let's get on our way."

The minute they arrived at the gates, all the villains scattered in every direction. Izuku and HItoshi ducked into a building just inside the gates and as soon as they found a room with a door that could actually close, Izuku dropped down cross legged on the floor and pulled out his laptop.

Hitoshi took off his jacket and stuffed it into his backpack, "You'll be reaching out through my comms, right?"

"As soon as I gain access, yeah." Izuku nodded, not looking up from the screen. "The hero comms will obviously be able to communicate with each other, not just the teachers, so it's probably just a setting that I'll be able to mess with once I hack into the system."

"It should be easier than hacking the main school, thankfully." Hitoshi shrugged, taking off his combat pants and revealing the ripped jeans underneath. "From what I know of Nedzu's personality, he'll make it possible for people to hack in for exercises like this, just to see if anybody will be crazy enough to try it."

Izuku grinned, “I guess it’s a good thing that we’re a little crazy then.”

Hitoshi pulled on a hawks t-shirt over his armored undershirt and did a little spin, “How do I look?”

“Like a civilian.” Izuku nodded in satisfaction. “Good luck getting our weapons. I’ll call you when I get our comms up and running.”

Hitoshi left him to his hacking and hurried out onto the street.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: November 10, 2021 (MST)

Last Minute

Chapter Summary

The villains prepare for the heroes to arrive.

Chapter Notes

Art!
OneAMYak X
PinelessSpine

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi kept his hands in his pockets as he walked down the deserted streets, glad to see they'd been correct about most of the other villains rushing to stake out the objectives in the first few minutes. Once the heroes arrived in a couple hours, this would be one of the only safe places to be recognizable as a villain because the way the exercise was currently run, the civilians were definitely *not* on their side. They'd avoid it later, once they got their hands on some civilian tokens, but for now, this area had exactly what Hitoshi needed. Weapons.

The pawn shop Izuku had told him to go to was at the bottom of a staircase in the middle of a dark alley, so about as shady as it could get. Hitoshi didn't bother knocking on the door before going inside. The most dangerous villains acted like they already owned everything and then worked to make that happen, so that's what he and Izuku were going to do.

The man at the counter looked up as Hitoshi came in, "Hello there. You're a bit younger than my usual clientele, but I'm not one to turn away a customer."

"I'm sure." Hitoshi said dryly. "I hear this is the best place to get weapons."

The man grinned, "You heard right. You can call me Shiguro. What did you have in mind?

"The works." Hitoshi said smoothly. "I need at least 4 handguns and an assortment of knives, but I've recently come into a little cash, so

I'm looking forward to seeing what you've got."

Shiguro grinned and straightened up a bit, "Ooh, I always like a challenge, especially when it comes with deep pockets."

He gestured for Hitoshi to wait and disappeared into the back room for a few minutes, which Hitoshi used to get a look around. There wasn't much to see, honestly, but that was as expected and he ran through what he knew about the guy he was dealing with. He and Izuku had found a forum for past participants and it seemed like everyone had something to say about this guy. From what he'd heard, this Ito guy seemed almost too good to be true.

Because he was.

Shiguro came back into the front with a large duffel bag, "Here you go, kid. Tell me what you think?"

Hitoshi gave him a wary look before taking the duffel and looking through it. There was a variety of handguns, shotguns, and a sniper rifle, which would definitely come in handy, as well as a few knives and explosives, which they wouldn't need to buy if everything went according to plan, but it was probably a good idea to have them, just in case the job later went south. Overall, it seemed like a good start and they could always steal more later if they needed it.

"Throw in a bit more ammo and we'll call it good." Hitoshi said. "Hey, you've got a pretty good variety of goods here, how do you keep track of it all?"

"Oh, it's my quirk." Shiguro said. "I have an insanely good memory, so everything I have and everything I get goes right up here in my big old brain and stays there. A lot less risky than keeping physical copies lying around for the police to find."

"Hmm." Hitoshi nodded. "Yeah, that makes sense. So there's no physical record of what I'm buying. I just want to make sure, in case you try going to the police or something."

"What? No, there's no copies!" Shiguro put a hand on his heart. "I would never…"

Hitoshi smirked as he took control, "Good, that makes things easier. Forget you ever had any of the items in this duffel bag and forget I was ever here while you're at it. Wait for three minutes after I've left before waking up."

He left Shiguro slack jawed at the counter and slung the duffel over his shoulder. Haru Shiguro. A pawn shop owner that appeared in the exercise every single year. His son was apparently participating in the exercise this year as a student, which was the only reason Hitoshi knew that he wasn't lying about his quirk, but it's not as if father and son were on opposite sides. From what the past participants had said, going to him was only a good idea if you planned on getting arrested the first few days. Somewhere on day three or four, he'd turn traitor for the heroes and give them, from memory, everything they needed to track down every villain he'd sold to.

It was a good thing that memories were finicky things.

There was a slight sound of static in his ear and Hitoshi winced as Izuku's voice came through a bit too loudly, "...toshi? Hitoshi? Can you hear me?"

"Loud and clear Izuku." Htioshi groaned. "A bit too loud, actually."

"Oh, sorry." Izuku continued speaking at a much more comfortable volume. "I have your next targets. Are you done at the pawn shop?"

"Yep." Hitoshi hefted the duffel, knowing that Izuu was probably watching him. "Feel free to delete the footage of me coming and going, that guy won't remember I was ever there."

"Good." Izuku was quiet for a short moment. "Done. Ok, are you ready for your target yet?"

Hitoshi readjusted the duffel, "Yeah, shoot."

He could practically hear Izuku smiling, "Ok, so go to the main square. There's going to be a guy in his early twenties with pink hair. He's your target."

Kyoka wandered the streets and walked into a cafe as she tried to figure out her first move. Despite it just being a training exercise, UA and HUC had turned the training grounds into a practically bustling city for the week and she got the feeling that for the civilians, it was basically just life as normal. There were grocery stores, cafes, even theaters that were just going about their daily operations, so it was a good thing that each of the villains had been given a handful of cash to get them started. They were obviously expected to just steal more later, but the time before the heroes arrived was for setting up, not committing crimes.

She was feeling kind of hungry, so she decided to stop at a cafe she passed while she waited. She got a few weird looks for her outfit, but nothing more than she usually did on a normal day, so she didn't really care. The line was really long, so she had a lot of time to think as she made her way to the front. She closed her eyes and both felt and heard one for all humming under her skin, slowly syncing with her heartbeat. It was both louder and somehow quieter than she'd expected and it almost felt like the power was trying to whisper so that it didn't hurt her ears. It would have been sweet if that was actually possible, but no. kyoka was pretty sure it was all in her head. There was no way a power could *whisper*.

"Hello there!" a middle aged woman smiled at her.. "What can I get for you?"

"A red bean cake?" Kyka browsed the menu. "And a boba tea, if that's alright."

"Coming right up!" the cashier pressed a few buttons. "Token?"

Kyoka frowned. "Token?"

"Oh, most of the little shops in the exercise have us tap that little participation. token they gave you at the start, you know, that little disk they gave you when you showed up. That's kinda how we check that you're a part of the exercise and not some intruder. Plus , it helps the company track which places are popular and what to bring back next year, so we always try to scan them. I'm surprised you don't remember that from orientenation."

"Yeah." Kyoka frowned and pulled out her token. "It seems like it'd be pretty important."

She put her token down on the counter and the mood immediately shifted. If she hadn't known all these people were paid actors, she would have thought they were actually panicking. The cashier looked genuinely terrified as she stared down at Kyoka's red and black token.

"It's a villain!" The lady cried out, a glint of challenge in her eyes as she watched for how Kyoka would react. "Somebody call the heroes!"

Denki resisted the urge to restlessly pace back and forth, "Remind me why we're just waiting?"

"Because the beginning of this exercise is going to be a bloodbath."

Mom explained. “The minute that the heroes set foot inside the city, it’s open season, so it’s going to be a race to see if we can get the objectives before the heroes can get to us, got it?”

“Kinda…” Denki looked down at the bank. “But why are we camping out so early? The heroes won’t be here for another two hours!”

“Because we’re racing the other villains.” Mom laughed quietly. “Look over there, see anything odd?”

Denki frowned and looked where mom was pointing. Sure enough, there were people hiding in the shadows on the building next to them, just like they were hiding in the shadows on this rooftop. Oh…

“So, we're not gonna have to fight the heroes,” Denki gulped, “But we are gonna have to fight *them.* ”

Mom grinned, “bingo.”

Denki took a deep breath and thought about those two terrifying kids he’d seen at the orientation, “Oh joy.”

Nedzu watched with interest as the Midoriya child drafted an email to the event coordinator for the HUC team using an email address that was just one letter off from his own. It was a brilliant piece of social engineering, but why did the boy want there to be a faux charity event on day three? Was he trying to lure the heroes? That wouldn't help much if it was just him and his friend against an entire class of heroes. He wasn’t about to interfere and risk not finding out the boys’ plan.

It was impressive that he had hacked into Nedzu’s systems so quickly. Honestly, it was impressive that he had tried at all, but his purple friend had been correct in assuming that Nedzu had made the exercise network significantly easier to hack into than UA itself. Still, it showed a considerable amount of skill and even though there were definitely areas of his technique that needed polishing, he got the job done. He’d singled out two seemingly random civilian files and Nedzu was still trying to figure out what he planned to do with them. He had a few suspicions, but it was more exciting at this point to see how things played out naturally.

He was already intrigued and the heroes hadn’t even arrived on site yet. Spectacular!

“A lot of the villains are already waiting for the heroes to come in.” Cementoss pointed out. “It’s a smart play. It’ll give them an advantage if they can pull off a robbery in those first few minutes.”

“And it looks like one of the middle schoolers has already gotten themselves into trouble.” Aizawa sighed. “Predictable.”

“Come now Aizawa, be fair.” All Might insisted. “It’s not as if the villains were warned about their tokens proclaiming their status.”

“They *were* warned, actually.” Midnight said. “It was just in the fine print and not in quite so many words.”

“Plus, they’re different colors.” Aizawa said. “It’s only logical to assume we’d use them to separate them and tell them apart from the civilians in the game.”

“I’m interested to see how she deals with being targeted like this.” Gran Torino had insisted on attending to make sure young Jiro was alright, which Nedzu had immediately approved. Hopefully, he’d be able to give a good example to All Might on how one should teach as well, because it had come to Nedzu’s attention that he still had a ways to go before he was ready for next year’s classes. “The heroes aren’t there, so the best move would be either to rob the place for extra cash, if she’s committed to the villain role, or just to turn tail and run. Both are decent options.”

“I’m more concerned about those two Shadows kids.” Midnight said. “They’ve decided to divide and conquer, it looks like, but they don’t have burner phones yet, so there’s no way to communicate with one another.”

Nedzu hid his grin behind his teacup. His teachers hadn’t noticed that Midoriya had spent this entire time gaining access to the system. They would definitely be surprised when they realized that Midoriya was using their own comms to communicate. That was the thing about humans, they were always making assumptions about how the rules were supposed to work. It was going to be delightful to see them all proven wrong.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: November 17, 2021 (MST)

Heartbeat

Chapter Summary

First blood.

Chapter Notes

Art!
MantisHead
Dante 404

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

Kyoka froze as the entire cafe turned on her. The heroes weren't there yet, but they were trying to make this simulation as real as possible, so there was still a possibility that police or even a vigilante might show up. She needed to run, but the only problem was that there was a crowd of people blocking the door. She needed to get them out of her way, like, five minutes ago.

Her heartbeat was rocketing out of control and it gave her an idea. Her eyes flicked around the cafe until she saw a speaker and she immediately shot out her earphone jacks and plugged herself in before anyone could stop her. She projected her heartbeat, but the speaker didn't have enough power to blow anyone out of the way. The people in the cafe were getting even more defensive than they had been before and were becoming just as anxious as she was. Her heartbeat beat a little faster as it echoed loudly through the cafe. This wasn't good.

"We need to get her. Now!" One of the civilians cried out. "When do the heroes get here?!"

"Not for a couple hours." Someone yelled. "We need to take care of this ourselves!"

Kyoka's heartbeat increased again and within a few minutes, the mob surrounding her was even more frightened and that pushed them to be even more aggressive. This was just an exercise, why were they acting so aggressively? She unplugged one of her earphone jacks and swiveled it around to listen to everyone's heartbeats and froze.

Everyone's heartbeat was in sync with hers.

Kyoka's eyes widened. She'd read a paper once that the human heartbeat will often change to match strong music or another person's heartbeat if they're near enough. Was that what was happening? There was only one way to find out. Kyoka took a deep breath and focused on calming down and slowing her heart rate.

The effect was almost immediate. She'd always had some control over her heartbeat, but it seemed oddly easier today and the mob actually *did* calm down in sync with her as she slowed the rhythm she was projecting. She gulped and focused on projecting a calming beat as she turned slowly to the cashier, "I'm just here for some food. Give me a pastry and let me be on my way."

The cashier's eyes were hazy as she grabbed somebody else's order and handed it to her, "You seem like a nice young lady. Have a good day."

"O-ok." Kyoka turned back to the mob...well, the crowd, now that they'd all calmed down. "Clear me a path to the door, please."

There were some nods as people agreeably stood aside and Kyoka considered her next move. It probably wouldn't take long for them to snap out of it once she stopped projecting her heartbeat, so...she unplugged and booked it, not stopping until she was down the street and around the corner.

Her heartbeat had risen again, but she wasn't projecting it, so the only person affected was herself as she clutched the paper bag to her chest and sunk down against a brick wall, "What the heck just happened?"

Hitoshi put his hands in his pockets and sauntered through the square while keeping an eye out for his target. He'd stashed most of the weapons somewhere safe and kept one knife and one handgun hidden away, just so he didn't look too suspicious. There was a lot of pink haired guys wandering around today and he sighed and discretely pressed his comm, "Izuku, I need a bit more of a detailed description."

"Oh, right…" Izuku's voice said. "Ok, um, oh! He's the one sitting at the fountain! His name is Hiroshi Tameda, by the way"

Hitoshi looked over and, sure enough, there was a guy with pink hair sitting at the fountain. He smiled, "Much better. Thanks Izuku."

“No problem.” Izuku responded. “Good luck.”

Hitoshi nodded and made his way toward his target, clearing his throat when he got close enough, “Um, hi. Do you know any good places to eat around here?”

Tameda huffed in annoyance, “Well, if you bothered to look around…”

Hitoshi took control with a smile, “Walk beside me.”

Tameda stood up like a puppet and Hitoshi nervously walked beside him, slinging an arm around his shoulder and keeping up a stream of nonsense conversation so they looked like two friends despite the stilted way that Tameda was walking and his blank expression. This was the most risky part of their entire plan. If someone were to pay attention to them or recall them acting suspiciously and tell the heroes...

Finally, *finally,* they got out of sight of the streat and Hitoshi breathed a sigh of relief, “Hey, sorry about this dude, but I’m gonna need your token if I want to pass as a civilian.”

He pulled out the gun, making sure the silencer was attached correctly before he took aim. It took him a surprising amount of mental effort to actually pull the trigger. Even though he *knew* it was just a paint gun, he was still taking this guy out of the game permanently and it felt real. After a long moment, Hitoshi took a deep breath and fired at his heart.

The silence in the viewing room was deafening.

“Did he just…” Mic’s jaw dropped and he looked at the others in shock. “Is he allowed to do that? The heroes haven’t arrived yet.”

“That guy isn't one of the official targets.” Snipe pointed out. “Therefore killing him ain’t an objective and normal crimes ain’t *technically* disallowed before the heroes arrive.”

“Yeah, otherwise that Jiro girl would have been disqualified for stealing breakfast.” Midnight said. “I still want to know how she did that. I know her file says she can project her heartbeat, but that was something else!”

“My only question about Shinso is *why?* ” Aizawa leaned forward.

“Why kill a random civilian before the heroes have even arrived.”

“I’m surprised you haven't figured it out yet, Aizawa.” Nedzu said in delight. “But perhaps this will help.”

He projected Tameda’s file onto the screen and the teachers watched in shock as the file changed before their eyes, Shinso’s face and name replacing Tameda’s within just a few seconds.

“I believe we need to officially inform Tameda that he is now deceased.” Nedzu smiled. “And I suppose congratulations are in order for Shinso on his civilian disguise.”

Tameda staggered back and looked at Hitoshi incredulously, “Oi! What the heck, dude?”

“Sorry.” Hitoshi said sheepishly. “Can you hand over your token now?”

“What?!” Tameda paused and listened to his comm, then burst out laughing. “I can’t believe you seriously just killed me. The exercise hasn’t even started yet!”

“Yeah, well, I kinda need to steal your identity before the heroes get here.” Hitoshi shrugged. “So...your token? And thanks for being so cool about everything by the way.”

“No problem.” Tameda flipped his token like a quarter and made Hitoshi catch it, which he did. “I mean, Endeavor’s my favorite hero, so people being jerks doesn't really bother me.”

“Ouch.” Hitoshi deadpanned. “Thanks for the vote of confidence.”

Tameda laughed, “Ok, but you better win this. If you’re forcing me out of the game this early, you have to at least have something to show for it.”

Hitoshi grinned, “Oh, don’t worry. We will.”

Izuku breathed a sigh of relief. After completing Hitoshi’s file just minutes after their first kill, he’d pointed out another target and now they had two civilian tokens and the files to match a whole hour before the heroes were set to arrive. Perfect.

“Ok, Hitoshi, um, I’m gonna change out of my villain gear and try to

find us a place to live for the week." Izuku said. "Can you get us groceries and meet me there?"

"Sure thing, Izuku." Hitoshi responded. "And we're sitting out the mad rush at the beginning, right?"

"Well, not sitting out." Izuku said slowly.

HItoshi sighed, "We're watching the whole thing via the cameras aren't we."

Izuku smiled, "Well how else are we supposed to get to know our competition?"

Rush

Chapter Summary

The mad rush begins!

Chapter Notes

Art!
Claire;P
Dante 404

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mom smiled as the clock struck noon, the exact time that the heroes were set to arrive in the fake city, “Ok, Sparky. It’s go time!”

They jumped off the roof and Denki looked over to see the rival group of villains they’d seen earlier doing the same thing. Mom grinned, “I’ll take care of these guys, you go in and hold up the cashier.”

Denki gulped, “What?”

“Just use your electricity and threaten them a little bit.” Mom shrugged, her own hand coated in electricity. “It’s just like the movies, I believe in you.”

Denki exhaled slowly, “O-ok then. Good luck?”

Mom smiled, “You too sparky. Knock ‘em dead.”

Denki gave a jerky nod of affirmation and ran through the glass doors of the bank, his entire body sparking, “This is a robbery! Give me all your money!”

He winced at how stupid he sounded, but the teller leapt into action and started shoveling the money from the register into a little bag. They probably knew they’d get robbed in the first few minutes. Once the money was in the bag, the teller tied the bag shut with a ribbon and Denki noticed a little badge hanging off it. It was around the size of his hand and emblazoned with a large *#8* . That must be how they identified the objectives!

The teller shoved the bag onto the counter, “Just take it! Don’t hurt us!

“Did you get the money Sparky?” Mom came bounding through the door and her eyes zeroed in on the bag of cash. “Good work!”

“Uh…yeah!” Denki nodded and gave her a thumbs up as she grabbed the cash. “Easy as pie.”

“Good.” She looked out the window as there was a giant crash down the street. “Now for the hard part. The heroes are here.”

Kyoka largely ignored the heroes as she made her way around the city, her villain token firmly hidden in her pocket. She still couldn’t figure out what had happened back at that cafe. How had she even done that? She’d never been able to control others using her heartbeat before, so it must be a new development because of One for All. She’d thought that it was supposed to make her punch stronger, but apparently it had manifested in a different way than it had in All Might. She took a deep breath and ducked into an alley as a group of heroes ran past her. She wasn’t too worried about the actual objectives at the moment. She had her own objectives to complete, namely, figuring out this new ability before she actually had to fight anyone with it.

She should get some portable speakers, but she’d have to find a place that didn’t ask for her token…or she’d have to steal them. Kyoka huffed. Of course she’d have to steal them. Speakers, however, weren’t always very subtle. If she was projecting her heartbeat, there was a chance the heroes would be able to block her influence with earplugs. If she could figure out a way to do it quietly, then she might be able to get what she needed without actually fighting for it.

She waited until the heroes were out of sight before stepping out of the shadows and walking up to the nearest civilian, an older woman who seemed nice, but also seemed like someone Kyoka could overpower in the case of an emergency. Unless she took after Recovery Girl, in which case, it’d been a good run. She jogged up to the woman and focused on calming her own heartbeat, “Hello! How are you!”

“Oh, I’m fine, sweetie, how are you?" The woman smiled, but she didn’t have that blank quality the people in the cafe had had, so Kyoka assumed she was just choosing to be nice, not being forced into calmness by her quirk. She’d have to try something else.

“Um, I’m fine.” Kyoka slowly snaked one of her earphones over and jabbed it into the woman’s arm, immediately focusing on projecting a calming heartbeat. “I need your help with something.”

The woman struggled for a moment, but calmed down almost immediately, her eyes taking on the blank quality that meant her emotions were now under Kyoka’s control, “Of course, sweetie, what can I help you with?”

Kyoka swallowed thickly and looked around, “Actually, that’ll be everything, thanks.”

She unplugged and ran. The woman sat there dazed for a few seconds before letting out a blood curdling scream, “Villain! It’s a villain! Where are the heroes!”

“Oh crap.” Kyoka rushed down an alley and focused on stealth and keeping to the shadows as she hurried away. “Ok, so that worked...ish, now to find an electronics shop.”

Nejire was feeling a lot of emotions right now, but most of all, she was excited. Sure, Tamaki might be nervous about fighting the fake villains and Mirio was concerned about stopping as many villains as possible, but Nejire was mostly thinking about how exciting this all was! They fought villains during their work studies, of course, but never all together as a class, so all she could think was how much fun this was gonna be!

Their class was an interesting mix. Aizawa had expelled a lot of them during their first year, or at least demoted them to general studies, so they’d ended up with some transfer students from other schools or from different departments. As long as they had the determination to be true heroes, Aizawa could work with them,, but if they didn’t, well...Nejere was just happy that she and her friends had made the cut!

Their class president had taken charge and sent half of them to protect an objective right from the start, while the other half had gone to the fake hero agency to get everything set up. Nejire and her boys had gotten sent to a museum and she and Amajiki had both been hoping that they’d have some time to browse through the exhibits first, but no luck. As soon as they’d arrived, the alarms had started going off and Mirio had had to phase through the wall in order to stop two villains who were trying to steal a vase.

Nejire and Tamaki had caught up to him quickly, of course, but by that time, Mirio had already managed to corner the two against a wall. They took their places on either side of him and got into battle stances.

The two men, who were similar enough they could be brothers, looked at each other and one of them grimaced, “We’re gonna have to run, aren’t we Ichiro?”

“Yeah, Jiro, we are.” Ichiro sighed. “We’re not allowed to use Trigger in this exercise, so there’s no way we’ll be able to lift this huge thing after we activate our quirks.”

“What are you talking about?” Mirio smiled. “Aren’t you here to give us a fight?”

Ichiro laughed, “No way! We’re just here to annoy Eraser and make sure he doesn't forget about us!”

“Yeah.” Jiro laughed. “Here! Catch!”

Tamaki barely managed to transform one arm into a tentacle and catch the vase before it shattered. When Nejrie looked back toward the villains, they were gone and the only thing she could see in their place were two little grasshoppers running on two legs.

“Eat our dust!” One of them screamed in a high pitched voice. “Hotta Jump!”

They both jumped over the heroes heads and were out the door before Nejire could even wrap her head around their quirks. They would never be able to keep track of something so small long enough to give chase.

Tamaki sighed, “Well...at least we got the vase.”

“But I wanted to catch them!” Nejire pouted. “What even is this thing anyway?”

It looked like any fancy terracotta vase, but instead of a scene from mythology painted on it, it was a giant #2. Nejire smiled as she remembered what Powerloader had told them about each of the objectives having a number, “So we just need to protect this from the other villains!”

Mirio nodded, “Yeah, we’ll take it back to the agency so it can be

better defended. It's *definitely* the second objective. How many were there again?"

"For the villains? Thirteen." Tamaki shuttered. "But they get extra credit for any heroes they kill."

Mirio grinned, "Well then, we just won't let them kill us!"

Chapter End Notes

> We don't know a whole lot about the second years, so I decided to go with a mix of OCs, the big three, and some students from the provisional licensing exam.
>
> Next Update: December 1, 2021 (MDT)

Hot Potato

Chapter Summary

Denki's got an objective, but can he keep it?

Chapter Notes

Memes!
X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Denki's eyes widened as a hero came barrelling into the bank and grabbed both of them with tentacles that were growing like hair out of his head. He immediately started struggling against the hold, which just made the hero smile, "Hey man, that's not gonna work. I'm Ogawa...oh, sorry, I don't really have an official hero name yet. But anyway, I'm here to stop you!"

"Just follow my lead, Sparky." Even though she was as trapped as he was, Mom grinned. "Eat our sparks!"

She electrified herself and Denki only hesitated a moment before doing the same. The hero seized and stumbled back, loosening his tentacles just enough that Denki could wriggle his way free. Mom bolted out the door and Denki shoved the objective under his arm as he scrambled after her. It didn't take long for the hero to recover from their joint attack, not nearly as long as Denki had expected, and they only had a few seconds head start down the street before he was chasing after them. Denki could see the other villains from earlier watching them from the surrounding rooftops and gulped as he gripped the objective a little tighter against his body. If this was what being a villain was like, why would anyone choose that? They were surrounded by enemies on every side! Who wanted to live like that?!

One of the villains was absolutely huge and Denki caught a glimpse of him throwing himself off the roof and onto the hero. Denki didn't look back to make sure the hero was alright, though, because he was too busy worrying about the other two villains, a man and a woman, who had just dropped down to block their path. He skidded to a stop beside Mom, who was already in a fighting stance staring down their new opponents.

"I'd give up now if I were you fellas." Mom smiled. "You couldn't beat

me earlier, you can't beat me now."

"We weren't trying our best earlier." The woman smirked and pulled out a dull knife coated in red paint. "But now that your boy there did the work of getting the objective, it's a different story."

"Toss me the bag." Mom said without looking at him. "We'll split up and meet at the rendezvous point, got it?"

Denki nodded quickly, "Ok."

"Go!"

He tossed her the bag, but before she could catch it, a gust of wind picked it up and carried it toward the male villain, "Got ya."

"Oh." Denki said quietly. "Well, that's not good."

"Ectricity quirks, most likely related, and the ages point to a mother-son duo." Izuku muttered under his breath. "Fairly standard strength enhancement. I wonder if it's like fatgums and has to do with body weight. Something to do with knives and an obvious wind manipulation. I wonder how far that goes…"

Hitoshi shook his head as Izuku muttered to himself. They had managed to find a nice apartment for themselves without too many neighbors and so far no one had noticed that they weren't supposed to be there, which was good. The other villains were running around completely unaware that Izuku was tearing apart their quirks though the cameras and Hitoshi was doing his best to do the same with their personalities. The electricity quirk users would be hard to turn against each other, but he might be able to do it, if he took control of one and gave just the right orders. Making them fight each other in general would also be effective emotional manipulation, so there were plenty of things he could do.

The heroes had managed to arrest a couple of the minor villains right off the bat. The ones with the grasshopper quirks had gotten away and it still remained to be seen who would end up with the bank objective and if any of those villains would actually get away. If anyone did, HItoshi was betting on the older of the two electricity users. She seemed to have the most fighting experience out of everyone there.

Hitoshi had doubted that the heroes would actually take the objectives to the agency, but the trio who had protected the vase had

immediately decided to do just that, which meant that their plan was on track. Hitoshi glanced over to Izuku and sighed. Nobody but Izuku was crazy enough to come up with that plan.

Jiro hadn't taken part in the initial rush either, but that didn't mean that she'd just been sitting around. She'd been looking for something, as far as Hitoshi could tell, and she'd been camped outside an tech store for a few minutes now looking for a mark. At least, that's what Hitoshi assumed she was doing. She kept looking at the people passing by and almost approaching them before chickening out. She somehow still managed to keep mostly out of sight, which meant that no one had noticed her suspicious behavior, but she needed to act quickly and do whatever she was planning soon, or else she was going to get caught.

A young man a few years older than them walked by her hiding spot and Jiro took a deep breath before strolling out of her hiding spot, carefully looking as normal as possible as she trailed after the guy. When he was almost at the store, he suddenly went rigid before relaxing and Hitoshi leaned forward to get a closer look at the screen. It was hard to see, but it almost looked like Jiro had stabbed one of her earphone jacks into his hand, but he couldn't be sure because it wasn't a second later that they started moving, him walking right beside her the whole way.

"Hey, Izuku, can you get me any visuals inside the electronics store?" Hitoshi asked. "I think Jiro's making a move."

"Uh, sure." Izuku absently pulled up the cameras and went back to watching the other villain fights. "Tell me if she does anything interesting."

Hitoshi nodded and watched as Jiro walked with her victim through the store, picking up some high end speakers before whispering something to the guy and walking up to the counter. She didn't have to say another word. The guy flashed his token and paid for the speakers and Hitoshi's jaw dropped as he realized that she was somehow controlling him *though* her earphone jacks.

"Hey, Izuku, I think you're going to want to see this." He pointed to Jiro, who was simply walking out of the store with her victim like nothing was out of the ordinary. "I'm not the only brainwasher here."

"Really?" Izuku watched for a moment and then started muttering again. "This is perfect, if we can convince the police and heroes that

she's committing your crimes then we won't have to be as careful, not that we won't be careful in the first place, obviously, but it'll give us some leeway…"

He trailed off and started scribbling in his notebook. Hitoshi kept watching as Jiro got partially down the street and then yanked the speakers out of the guy's hand and started booking it as her victim screamed. He winced.

"Um, by the way." Hitoshi grimaced. "She might need a little more quirk training."

The guy with the wind quirk smirked at them as he tossed the objective up and down. He was too far away for Denki to hit with his electricity, but it looked like Mom had it covered. She ran forward, hands already sparking until the woman with the knives *threw one at her face* . She managed to dodge, barely, but had to turn to fight the woman instead of the stupid guy who was now running away with the objective. Denki looked back toward the hero, who was still fighting that big guy, and swore. It looked like it was up to him. He bolted after the wind quirk user, who suddenly stopped when he ran into a crowd of people. Denki didn't have time to stop before barreling into him. It took him a split second to think to activate his quirk, which gave wind guy an opening to throw the bag over to big guy, who caught it. The hero, though, responded by wrapping him up in his tentacles and he had to wriggle out of them to toss the objective again.

Mom shoved knife lady to the ground and jumped to catch it, then threw it to Denki, "Run Sparky!"

Denki almost fumbled the bag, but managed to catch it just barely and ran as fast as he could. He skidded around the corner and grinned. He'd done it! He'd gotten away!

There was a burning pain in his lungs and Denki stumbled to a stop, completely unable to breath. What? What was happening? Was he dying? Was this a medical emergency? Had he punctured a lung? He collapsed onto the ground, dropping the objective as his fingers lost the strength to grip it. What was going on?!

"That was a pretty good shock there, Sparky." A voice said and Denki tried gasping for air as wind guy knelt in front of him and grabbed the objective. "Too bad my quirk is Air Control, huh? It works on the air in people's lungs too, as I'm sure you already figured out. I'll let you

breathe in a minute, but, uh, I'll be keeping *this* for safekeeping, ok?"

He winked and disappeared into the darkness at the end of the alley. Denki had no idea if the time after was *actually* a minute, but if it was, it felt like the longest minute of his life. His vision was starting to go dark before he felt air flooding back into his lungs again. He coughed and gulped, desperately trying to get enough oxygen. At some point, he felt a hand rubbing his back and his mom's voice trying to calm him down, but it was kind of hazy.

After he finally managed to get his breathing under control again, he looked up to see Mom looking at him in concern, "Are you ok, Sparky?"

"Uh, I'll get back to you on that." Denki rasped. "Wind guy got away."

Mom nodded, "So did the lady with the knives. The big guy got caught by the hero though. Let's hurry and get away while he's still busy with the arrest."

Denki nodded and shakily got to his feet. Why would anyone want to be a villain?

Chapter End Notes

> Ogawa is one of my Recycled OCs and was originally featured in Viridian the Green Guide.
> Here's some excellent art of him from Ogawa is now my husband
>
> The gang of villains that the Kaminari's fought, the Blue Dog Gang, are also Recycled OCs and were originally featured in Mastermind: Strategist for Hire.
>
> Next Update: December 10, 2021 (MST)

Heist

Chapter Summary

Look at our boys, out there committing crimes...so proud.

Chapter Notes

Art!
OgawaIsMyHusband < 3
mattie

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku concentrated on looking as lost as possible as he reviewed the state of the exercise so far. Of the thirteen objectives, three had been claimed by the villains in the initial rush, one was in progress, and two were currently *safe* in the hands of the heroes. He ran through the list in his head:

1. Snitch - unclaimed
2. Vase - at hero agency
3. hostage - unclaimed
4. Diamond - claimed
5. Drugs - unclaimed
6. Weapons- unclaimed
7. Explosives - unclaimed
8. Bank- claimed
9. Ransom- in progress
10. Convenience store - claimed
11. Car- unclaimed
12. Crown - unclaimed
13. Documents - at hero agency

The claimed objectives were the easy ones that just required going in and stealing something without any need for information or special materials. The rest of the objectives all had something getting in the way, but Izuku and Hitoshi specialized in overcoming obstacles, so rather than being intimidated, they were just excited. So of course, they had decided to go after the most challenging objective on the first day.

Izuku held back a smile when he saw his target around the corner. Ryou Hanzou. A transfer into the hero course from General Education, his quirk was similar to Gang Orcas in that it gave him the head of a great white shark as well as the ability to do anything a shark could do, which meant that as long as he avoided the teeth and didn't get him near any water, Izuku would be fine. Hanzou's hero costume was simple, basically just a short sleeved wetsuit with a blue and green wave design running up the sides, and Izuku could think of a few improvements right off the bat, but he wasn't here to fix the heroes costumes or give them suggestions for improvement. No. he was here to absolute decimate them.

Izuku purposefully made his way through the crowd toward Hanzou until he got close enough, then started running, "Mr. Hero! Mr. Hero!"

Hanzou turned and looked down at Izuku, "Um...hi. Can I help you?"

"Oh," Izuku put on a worried expression, grateful he looked a couple years younger than he was. "I'm lost. Could you maybe help me find my way home?"

Immediately, Hanzou smiled and Izuku held back a smirk. Helping a lost child was one of the hero's objectives, so too bad Izuku wasn't *actually* a lost civilian. Well, not bad for Izuku, but bad for Hanzou.

"Sure kid." Hanzou puffed out his chest proudly. "Just tell me where you need to go and I'll get you there."

Izuku gave him the fake address and Hanzou nodded and pressed his comms, "Hey, guys, I'm just helping this lost kid find his way home and then I'll be back on my normal patrol, ok?"

He didn't say anything else and Izuku relaxed slightly. If he'd given the other heroes the address or even the neighborhood they were going to, that would make things a bit more complicated, but as long as he didn't give them any more information than he had, Izuku could still proceed as planned.

The two of them weaved their way through the streets until they reached a place a lot less busy and a lot more abandoned. Izuku acted appropriately confused at street corners and let Hanzou *help* him as much as possible, but soon enough, they still ended up exactly where Izuku had planned.

He waited until there were no witnesses before calling out, "That's it! That's my building!"

Izuku started running and Hanzou jogged after him.

“You kinda live way out there, don’t you?” Hanzou panted. “Well, um, if you’re found, I should probably be heading back.”

Hanzou was getting nervous, which meant that Izuku was running out of time. He skidded to a stop, “Actually, there *was* one more thing...”

“I guess that’s ok.” Hanzou said, tensing slightly. “What is it?”

“Um…” Izuku channeled his inner fanboy as he grabbed his notebook and shoved it forward. “Can I please have your autograph?”

Hanzou relaxed and took the notebook, “Really? I’ve never had somebody ask for my autograph before! This is kinda cool!”

Izuku waited on the balls of his feet until Hanzou looked down to sign the notebook and then he struck, punching Hanzou directly in the nose. He dropped the notebook, stumbling back and giving Izuku just enough of an opening to target his pressure points. They were bound to be a bit different on someone with shark anatomy, but if he focused on the places where his body was more human and hit hard enough in just the right places…

“Hey, what are you…?” Hanzou’s eyes rolled back as Izuku punched his pressure point. “Ow…”

He fell to the floor and Izuku waited tensely for a few seconds to make sure he was really out before running forward and flipping the switch that would functionally break Hanzou’s comm. He’d still be able to talk to the teachers, but not his fellow heroes, “Sorry, I need you alive for now. Ok...where did I stash that rope?”

Hitoshi perched on the windowsill and watched the pair of villains below. It was a girl with pigtails and a guy with green-grey skin and horns that looked large enough to pulverize both Hitoshi *and* Izuku if they made the wrong move, and that was without a quirk that made his fingers shoot out bullets. The duo had also managed to nab the diamond objective in the first few minutes of the exercise, thanks half to the girl’s drill-hair quirk and half to pure skill. From what Hitoshi had seen of their heist, he suspected that they had *some* past experience on the wrong side of the law, even if it wasn’t enough to disqualify them from the exercise, and Izuku had agreed. Normal civilians didn’t know how to drill through a safe that fast.

He took a deep breath as he ran through the character that he and Izuku had discussed for Shadows. He needed to act like he already knew everything and let them know that, no matter what they did, he would always come out on top. Hitoshi made sure his voice changer was on securely before speaking, “Nice place you’ve got here. Dark, musty, perfect villain vibes, but then again you’d know all about that, wouldn’t you?”

The labs weren't very heavily guarded...unless the ten layers of security alarms and weapons systems counted. A villain would immediately trip every single alarm and call a giant security team, not to mention every hero in the area, but Izuku wasn’t a villain at the moment. He held his breath as he swiped Hanzou’s hero license at the front gate, grinning when the keypad beeped and turned green. The rules of the exercises stated that the license wouldn't work anymore as soon as Hanzou died, but for right now, Izuku was a hero. Even if he was currently dressed in full villain gear.

He waited for the gate to open and strolled right in, careful to avoid any people running around. He’d already hacked into the system and looped the footage, just in case anyone was watching, but from his research, this facility was more of a shell that was supposed to *look* intimidating than it was an impenetrable fortress and the security team were just more HUC actors, not actual security guards. It would still be a challenge to get in and out, of course, but if he wanted to be a scary hero, he needed to work on stealth anyway. It was good practice and all he had to do was stay out of sight.

A guard came around the corner and Izuku froze. So much for that plan.

“Hey!” The guard’s eyes narrowed. “You’re not supposed to be here.”

At Hitoshi’s voice, both villains jumped to their feet and started looking around. The girl’s hair twisted into drill-like points as her eyes swept the room and the guy readied his hands to shoot as he called out into the darkness, “Who’s there?”

“Just a friend.” Hitoshi took control as he jumped down from the window, landing in a crouch. “Now, if you agree to be nice, I’ll let go of Mr. Frankenstign here and we can have a friendly chat, if you don’t he’ll attack you. Got it?”

The girl glanced between Hitoshi and her partner, tensing when she

realized the latter was just standing there, eyes blank and limbs hanging loosely at his side. She cursed, “A brainwasher? Of all the rotten luck…”

“Yep.” Hitoshi hummed, “Well? Have you come to a decision?”

“Fine.” The girl snarled. “Let him go and we’ll *talk.”*

Hitoshi grinned and let go, “Good, now let’s get introductions out of the way. What are your names?”

The two exchanged a nervous glance and the girl looked at HItoshi suspiciously, “Just cut to the chase. We know you’re after the diamond.”

Hitoshi held up his hands in surrender, “Actually, I’m not. At least, not right now. Now, your names?”

The girl hesitated for another long moment, “Akiko.”

“Maki.” The guy answered.

“Good. Now that wasn’t too hard, was it?” Shinso said. “Now let’s talk business.”

Akiko crossed her arms, “No. Fair is fair. Tell us your name first.”

Hitoshi’s social anxiety was going through the roof, but he forced himself to look calm. He was used to acting cocky to get a rise out of people and throw them off, so it was familiar in a way that was almost comforting. The longer he acted intimidating like this, the more he actually found himself having fun, which was something he hadn’t necessarily expected, but he wasn’t about to look a gift horse in the mouth. No, it was more fun to just roll with it.

“Hmmm.” Hitoshi made a show of thinking. “How about you call me Shadows.”

“That’s as good as we’re gonna get, isnt’ it?” Maki laughed. “Alright, Shadows, so if you’re not after the diamond objective, then what *are* you after?”

“Oh, you know, just trying to make some extra cash on the side.” Hitoshi shrugged. “So how would you like to know who the snitch is?”

“You’re an info broker.” Akiko sighed in realization. “I heard some rumors they were planning to add one this year.”

Hitoshi nodded, half wondering if Izuku had started those rumors himself, but couldn't get too distracted. He could always ask Izuku later, "So? Would you like the info or not?"

"Yes." Maki nodded. "How much?"

"How about a tenth of what you get from turning the objective in?" Hitoshi offered. "Either that or a favor…"

"We'll pay the money." Akiko said dryly. "We really aren't interested in owing any favors to someone like you."

"Suit yourself." Hitoshi shrugged and tossed them an envelope from his pocket. "Pleasure doing business with you."

He strolled out the front door of their hideout and couldn't keep a smile off his face. He liked feeling powerful.

Izuku saw the guard reaching for his comm and panicked. This mission, in fact their whole plan, relied on him getting in, getting the objective, and getting out without being noticed. Before he had the chance to hesitate, Izuku pulled out one of his guns and shot a paintball at the guard's chest. "Sorry, but I can't let you call for backup."

There was a second when Izuku couldn't be sure if it had worked, but then the guard sighed and took out his token, dropping it onto the floor. He didn't say anything else and neither did Izuku. He looked around for a moment until he found what looked like a garbage shoot and then picked up the token and shoved it inside. That would count as *hiding the body* in accordance with the rules, and one of Ectoplasm's clones would soon be there to pick up the dead guard, so he was free to move on. He gave a brief nod to the guard before stashing his gun and continuing on his way.

He had to pass three more security checkpoints on the way down to the basement, but none of them were manned and he didn't run into any more guards. He reached the final room and swiped Hanzou's hero license to open the door, whistling when he saw the sheer amount of experimental explosives that were inside. A large badge with a #7 was stuck to one of the three pallets and Izuku grimaced, "Uh...change of plans, we're gonna need to steal a truck."

Once he was a safe distance away from the villain's hideout, Hitoshi

called Izuku on the comms, “Hey, I’m done passing along the info on the snitch. Is there anything else you’d like me to do before I head back to the apartment?”

“Um...give me a minute…” There was a noise that sounded like an engine starting and Izuku cheered under his breath before responding, “Sorry, I had to figure out how to hotwire a car. Um, yeah, since this job is going to take a little longer than I’d planned, could you go take care of the hero I stole the license from earlier this morning?”

“Sure thing.” Hitoshi said. “You set it up so I can track his hero comm from my phone, right?”

“Yep.” Izuku said. “There’s gotta be a forklift around here somewhere...oh, just make sure you call before you kill him. If I’m still inside the lab when his license deactivates then…”

“Then the game is over.” Hitoshi nodded. “Got it. No pressure.”

Izuku snorted, “Pretty much, yep! I mean, I have a plan b in case one of us gets caught, but still...ok, I found a forklift, so I gotta go. Good luck!”

Hitsohi rolled his eyes and started looking around for a place where he could change back into his civilian clothes, “Do I even want to know?”

Chapter End Notes

Hanzou is a recyled OC from Cheat Code.
Akiko and Maki are based on background characters from Canon.

Next Update: December 15, 2021 (MST)

Expectations

Chapter Summary

I adore this chapter.

Chapter Notes

Art!
A True Gentlebee
cha cha real smooth fruity toad

Memes!
X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“They’ve weaponized the exercise.” Aizawa groaned.

“I know!” Nedzu chirped back. “Isn’t it delightful?”

“That’s one word for it.” Aizawa took another sip of coffee and sighed. “I don’t think we’ve ever had fake villains try to become info brokers before.”

“There *was* one year,” Midnight said, “But they ended up eliminated by the first night and their info wasn’t even very good anyway.”

“So nothing like these two young’uns.” Snipe chuckled. “If they’re in the system, they definitely know who the snitch is and probably where they are too. Pretty easy to put that in an envelope.”

“But why help the other villains?” Mic asked. “They’re basically giving away objectives!”

“Maybe they don’t think they can get the objectives themselves?” Thirteen suggested. “They *are* just kids, after all.”

“Just kids that successfully kidnapped a hero and are in the process of stealing enough explosives to level a city block.” Cementoss said. “I think we might have underestimated them.”

Aizawa snorted, “You think?”

“There’s one more option I don’t think we’ve considered.” Nedzu sipped his tea. “These boys seem to be rather cut-throat, don’t you

think?"

The teachers blinked and looked at each other for a long moment before Mic cleared his throat, "You think they plan to betray the other villains?"

"It's not a bad plan." Aizawa hummed. "Let the others deal with the high security and the heroes, then steal the objectives back. If they can pull it off, it might just be less work than going after the objectives themselves."

Nedzu nodded, "Exactly."

"That's…" Snipe shook his head. "That's gotta be against the rules somehow."

"Nope." Nedzu said happily. "Everything they've done has been perfectly legal, keeping in mind the loopholes, of course."

"Of course." Aizawa rolled his eyes. "And who put the loopholes there?"

Nedzu took another sip of tea, "Why Aizawa, I have no idea what you're talking about."

Hanzou woke up with a headache and groaned. The last thing he remembered was helping that lost kid and him asking for an autograph and…Hanzou's eyes widened and he tried to stand up only to fall flat on his face. That dumb kid hadn't just tied his hwritst behind his back, of course not! That would have been too easy. No, he'd gone through the trouble of tying his ankles together too. Hangzhou struggled fruitlessly for a few minutes before giving up and looking around. He was trapped in some sort of closet, but his captor had at least had the decency to leave a box fan in there to give him some air flow. He did his best to press his comm against his shoulder to activate it, "Guy's? Team, come in!"

There was nothing but static in answer and Hanzou's stomach sunk as he realized that kid must have done something to it. How had he even gotten into this situation? They'd gotten the villain files a full week before the exercise and all the hero students had practically memorized them so that they wouldn't be caught off guard. If that kid had been in the files, Hansou would have recognized him! Maybe he was just *working* with the villains and wasn't actually one himself. But if that was the case, then he would have hesitated before taking down

a hero. So he probably *was* a villain,but which one? Hanzou wracked his brain for a moment before he finally half-remembered one of the files they'd been given. They hadn't given much thought to it at the time because there wasn't as much info in it to memorize ,but now that he was sitting here, tied up in a closet with plenty of time to think, he was starting to wonder if maybe they should have paid more attention to the *Shadows* file. His captor had green hair and eyes and from the one, singular, photo they'd been provided, there was one kid with green accents on his outfit, so it wasn't too big of a leap to guess which one he'd just fallen prey to. Hanzou slumped against the wall with a groan, "Wonderful, just peachy. Hey! Can anybody hear me?! Help!"

Hitoshi checked his phone again and made his way into the abandoned apartment building. There were scuff marks along the hallway and HItoshi winced as he realized that Izuku must have had to drag the hero at least part of the way there. They'd both gotten a lot stronger since they met, but most of their training had been geared toward stealth not strength. Not that he was really trying to be stealthy right now, of course. But Hitoshi wasn't too concerned, considering that there was no one else around and he could already hear the hero yelling down the hallway. At least he was in the right place…

"That kid is in for a rude awakening." Cementoss said. "I bet he thinks he's about to get saved."

"Yes." Nedzu hummed, "The Shadows have the advantage of being able to disguise themselves as civilians. It comes in handy."

"Yeah, that's the only reason they were able to nab Hanzou in the first place." Snipe pointed out.

"They'd also taken the time to read the *heroes'* objectives . " Aizawa added. "They knew exactly what to bait him with to get him into an isolated area."

"True." Mic frowned. "Uh, Hound Dog? I think you might need to pencil this kid in for a session after this."

Hound Dog nodded, "I was thinking the same thing."

Hanzou's voice was starting to go hoarse and he really was

considering just giving up. He'd tried his comms at least a dozen times and had gotten static again and again, and the way he was tied up meant that there was no way to reach the ropes with his teeth, so his only option was to hope that there was a civilian in the area who would hear his yells and come cut the ropes. He hadn't thought it was very likely, the shadows kid had obviously put a lot of thought into this abduction and made sure that no one was around to see it, but he could still hope. He perked up when he heard footsteps coming down the hall toward him, "Hey! In here! Help!"

The footsteps came closer and Hanzou grinned as the door finally, *finally* creaked open. It was a kid with purple hair, probably around his same age and Hanzou heaved a sigh of relief. "Thank God, I've been here forever! I need to get out so I can contact my team. Can you just cut through these ropes? Then I'll be all good."

The purple haired kid frowned and tilted his head, "I'm a little confused…"

Hanzou sighed, interrupting him, "Look, I know I'm a hero and everything, but there was this kid and he pretended to be lost and led me here…"

"Oh no, I know exactly how you got here." The kid crouched down so they were looking eye to eye. "I'm just confused about why you think I'm here to save you?"

Hanzou's jaw dropped in horror and he remembered one very important fact.

Shadows was plural.

There was absolute silence in the watch room.

Eventually, Mic broke the silence, "Ok, well that's just terrifying."

"It's psychological torture." Aizawa gave him a look. "Of course it's terrifying."

"They're using fear to make sure their opponent stays off rhythm." Snipe said. "I'd even say it's a half-decent strategy if their opponent weren't already tied up."

"I'm all for tying people up." Midnight held her hands up. "But it does seem like poor form to traumatize someone you've already beaten."

“It’s unnecessarily cruel.” Thirteen agreed. “Why taunt them like this?”

That was when Nedzu piped up, “Because they’re actually thinking like villains.”

“Izuku?” behind Shinso’s voice, Izuku could hear Hanzou screaming for help. “Can I kill this guy yet? He’s really loud.”

“Almost.” Izuku eased on the breaks, instead of accidentally slamming them like he had the first few times. He was lucky none of the bombs in the back had exploded already. He swiped the hero’s licence in the last keypad and carefully drove through the gate before tossing the license out the window, “Ok, done.”

He heard a gunshot over the comms, “meet you back at the apartment?”

Izuku nodded, “I’ll drop these off and meet you there.”

“Sorry about that.” HItoshi shrugged and took a step forward to help Hanzou, who currently had red paint smeared across his chest. “Let me…”

“Sorry?” Hanzou pulled at the ropes and snarled. “Sorry?! Sorry doesn’t cut it. You tied me up and…”

“Technically, my friend tied you up.” Hitoshi interrupted. “And now I’m here to untie you, so…”

“Actually,” Hitoshi froze as an unfamiliar voice spoke in his ear. “I believe it’s best if you leave that to me. Perhaps it’s best if you’re not in the area when my clones comes to collect him.”

Hitoshi gulped and backed away. That must be ectoplasm, the teacher responsible for collecting all the fallen players. If they didn’t want him to untie Hanzou that meant…that meant that they didn’t trust him not to attack HItohsi even though he was now out of the exercise. And as HItoshi looked at Hanzou snarling at him, he couldn't help but agree that that was the safer option.

“Uh…Yeah.” Hitoshi nodded. “I’ll leave him to you.”

There was a sigh on the other end as HItoshi walked away, “Thank you for that, at least.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: December 22, 2021 (MST) December 24, 2021

Control

Chapter Summary

There's a little downtime.

Chapter Notes

Art!
OgawaIsMyHusband < 3 X
liryian
Peanut
ash

Memes!
X X X

afternoon, or just wait until the cover of darkness to see what strings we need to pull?"

Izuku shrugged and pulled out his laptop, "I need to send a few emails real quick. I need to establish a pattern of communication with them so they don't have any reason to be suspicious when *Nedzu* starts giving them tips tomorrow. Other than that, yeah, we're pretty much free. Any ideas?"

Hitoshi thought for a moment, "I've been thinking about Jiro. Didn't she say her quirk had something to do with enhancing her hearing?"

"Yeah." Izuku rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "But then, from what we saw earlier, it almost seems like yours."

"It's possible she was just lying." HItoshi suggested. "If her quirk's like…well, I've lied about my quirk plenty of times, but the truth always comes out eventually."

"It's also weird how little quirk control she has." Izuku thought out loud. "She doesn't seem to have experimented with it at all."

Hitoshi grimaced, "Actually, that's pretty common with mind control quirks. Nobody wants to volunteer to help a future villain."

Izuku grimaced too, "Oh. right."

"Yeah." Hitoshi sighed. "I was thinking that she *did* help us pick out our outfits, maybe we should return the favor with a few tips? I know we're planning on working alone, but…"

"But it'll be useful to have allies for the first few days." Izuku nodded. "Let me just finish this email and I'll track her down."

Mirio smiled as they finished setting up their mock hero agency. He knew it was just an exercise, and they'd all done internships and work studies before, but it was still cool that the teachers were letting them loose on this. Before, they always had someone looking after them and holding their hands, but right now, it was just them against the villains, just like it would be for real someday.

It was exhilarating!

Amajiki didn't feel the same way. Now that the groceries for the week were put away, he was hiding in the pantry while Neijire waited on

the counter, swinging her legs, “Oh come on amajiki. Cheer up! We won our fight!”

“The villains ran away.” Amajiki said piteously, his voice half-muffled by the door. “If they hadn’t, we could have lost.”

“Nah, they ran because they knew we were too strong for them to beat.” Mirio flexed. “We’re gonna do great, just you wait and see.”

The door opened and amajiki poked his head out as two of their classmates walked in. Shiguro Shin and Akane Kohaku had both transferred from the support course last year, so they were the ones who had been assigned to set up all the techie stuff like the agency’s command center.

When he saw them, Amajiki’s eyes widened and he slammed the pantry door closed, “Oh no, we’re being hacked.”

Kohaku rolled her eyes, the literal copper wires that made up both her hair and her quirk bouncing as she shook her head, “why do you always jump to the worst conclusions tamaki? We’re not being hacked.”

Amajiki poked his head out again, “We’re not?”

“Of course not silly!” Nejire giggled and hopped off the counter. “These people aren’t *real* villains or anything!”

Mirio nodded in agreement, “so what’s up?”

“Nedzu sent us a message.” Shin said. He was a bald boy with pointed ears whose quirk let him find any object he’d touched. “We were going around and collecting everyone who’s here so we can read it together.”

The three of them followed their classmates to the big room they’d set up as their case of operations. Pretty much all of their classmates were there by now, sitting around the table, with the exception of a handful who were still out on patrol.

Shindo, a kid with an earthquake quirk who had transferred from another hero school, looked around the table and frowned, “Hey, has anyone seen Hanzou? I thought he was supposed to be back from patrol by now.”

“Last I heard, he was helping a lost kid.” Camie, another transfer

student, said. “But that was a couple hours ago, so he should totally be back soon.”

Shindo shrugged, “He can read it when he comes back, the rest of us are curious *now!”*

“Fine, let’s just do this.” Kohaku projected Nedzu’s email up on the wall. “Now pay attention everyone.”

Dear Students,

Congratulations on surviving the first day of the exercise! I and the other faculty are proud of your efforts thus far and are looking forward to seeing how you stop the villains in the coming days. Good Luck!

Nedzu

UA Principal

Kyoka had no idea what she was doing, but she wasn’t about to admit that. So what if One for All had given her an *entirely new ability* that she hadn’t even considered. That didn’t mean she had to freak out… much. Now that she had a minute to relax, the significance of what she’d just done was hitting her like a truck. She’d just *controlled* people, like straight up played their emotions like a guitar. It was as cool as it was terrifying, and now she had less than a week to master her new ability, all while pretending to be a villain, going after objectives, and somehow making All Might and Gran Torino proud. Wonderful.

She had currently found an empty apartment to hide in. it didn’t have any furniture, but it didn’t have neighbors either, which meant that there was nobody around to turn her in. She’d learned her lesson about *that* the hard way. She was also getting hungry, but even with her new ability, getting groceries would be a challenge. So far, every time she’d used her emotion control, she’d ended up having to make a run for it and that was going to be fairly difficult with a bunch of bags. The speakers had been hard enough, she did *not* want to try that with eggs.

She froze when she heard footsteps out on her balcony. Nobody even

knew she was here and she couldn't think of any other reasons that someone would be traipsing across balconies. Was it a hero coming to arrest her? She got into a fighting stance and stared down the curtains until they started moving, and then stabbed blindly with her earphone jacks.

Whoever was on the other side of the curtain grabbed them both and started wrapping them around his hand as he walked into the room. Midoriya was grinning as he emerged from the curtain, "So you *could* hear us coming! I was starting to wonder if you'd lied about your quirk."

Kyoka tried to yank her earphone jacks out of Midoriya's grasp, but he was holding on tight. Shinso just looked bored as he pushed aside the curtain and walked inside, "Aw, is that anyway to greet your old friend?"

Kyoka narrowed her eyes suspiciously, "I thought you said we were enemies during this exercise."

"Well, yeah, but that doesn't mean we can't form alliances." Midoriya said, taking a closer look at her earphone jacks, "For example, we don't want to get on the wrong end of *these* and you need help with quirk control."

Kyoka stopped, "How…how did you know that?"

"We know a lot of things." Shinso gave her a teasing smile. "So…new quirk development or did you just not practice?"

Kyoka raised her chin stubbornly, "I'm not sure what you're talking about."

Suddenly, her brain went foggy and Shinso's smile went wide, "Relax."

All the tension left her body before she even had a chance to realize what was happening. Midoriya let go of her earphone jacks and he and Shinso exchanged knowing glances. It was only a few seconds and then her brain cleared as Shinso dropped his control.

"I'm talking about that." Shinso looked almost nervous, but covered it with a small smirk. "Although, I'm betting yours works a little differently."

"You…" Kyoka was a little breathless. "You can control people too."

“And *you* need help figuring out how to do that better,” Midoriya said. “So what do you say? Truce?”

Kyoka frowned, “What do *you* get out of it?”

Shinso rolled his eyes, “Izuku *really* likes quirks.”

Midoriya chuckled awkwardly, “Guilty. Um, I just really want to know more about how your quirk works.”

Jiro sighed, “You and me both.”

Chapter End Notes

More Memes!
X X X X X X X X

Next expected update: January 5, 2022 (MST)

Ransom

Chapter Summary

Things are coming together.

Chapter Notes

Art!
French boy
GuardianSoul X
Compass

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku grabbed his notebook and sat down on the floor, “Ok, so the whole controlling people thing is new, right?”

“Um, yeah.” Jiro said nervously. “The first time it happened, I was trying to do something else, but then I realized that people were reacting to my heartbeat, so…”

“So it’s more heartbeat control than pure brainwashing.” Shinso nodded. “How does it work?”

“Well…” Jiro gave him a look. “People react to my heartbeat.”

Izuku’s eyes widened in excitement, “With how the human nervous system works, that means that you can make people nervous.”

“Or calm.” Jiro shrugged. “That’s about all I’ve tried so far.”

“So why do you always run as soon as you use your quirk?” Hitoshi asked with a smirk.

“Because it only works as long as I'm plugged in!” JIro complained. “As soon as my heartbeat’s not influencing them anymore, they snap out of it.”

“So, the first thing we need to do is figure out a way to prolong your influence.” Izuku hummed. “You mostly try to leave while your victim is calm, from what I've seen,...”

“Wait, from what you’ve seen?” Jiro’s eyes narrowed. “Have you been watching me?”

“Of course I’ve been watching you.” Izuku frowned. “I thought that was obvious by now. Anyway, you usually leave when the victim is calm, but have you tried making them nervous before you go?”

“No,” Jiro said dryly, “because that usually leads to them attacking me.”

“Izuku’s not talking about just a little anxiety.” Hitoshi sighed. “He’s talking about launching a full blown panic attack so that by the time you leave, your victim doesn’t know which way is up.”

“That…” Jiro gulped. “That seems a little intense.”

“Well, yeah.” Hitoshi shugged. “But nobody’s ever fond of brainwashers and we’re practicing these techniques to use against villains. They aren’t nice, so why should we be?”

“Think about it.” Izuku added. “With your hearing, I’m sure you’ve practiced at least a little bit of stealth. You sneak up on your victim, get them to do what you need them to do, then leave them too disabled to chase you.”

Jiro hesitated for a long moment, “I’m not using it on civilians.”

“Of course not.” Izuku smiled, pulling out a burner phone he’d picked up on the way there. “You’ll be using it on heroes.”

Denki was charging their burner phone when it buzzed. He frowned and opened the message, “Mom, who’s Nedzu?”

Mom immediately jumped, “Only the principal of UA. If he’s the one texting us, then it must be really important.”

Denki shrugged and read aloud, *“Hello there! I hope the exercise is treating you well. I couldn’t help but notice that your boy has plans to attend UA and I thought you might like to know that there will be an interesting learning experience for him at 9 o’clock tonight in the old toy warehouse. Perhaps there might be an objective up for grabs there as well, you never know. Anyway, have a wonderful evening and good luck!”* He set down the phone. “Is he even allowed to give hints like that?”

“He’s the principal, of course he is.” Mom grabbed the phone and

reread the text. “Plus he’s got a reputation for manipulating things behind the scenes, so I’m not surprised. I guess he’s taken a liking to you, kiddo.”

“Really?!” Denki grinned. “That’s good, right?”

“Very good.” Mom smiled back. “Well, what are we waiting for? We’ve got plans tonight.”

“You’re really just going to let that kid keep impersonating you like that?” Mic asked incredulously.

Half the teachers were giving Nedzu significant looks but he was just smiling and watching it all unfold.

Aizawa rolled his eyes, “Yeah right. Like the rat would really pass up an opportunity for prime entertainment like this.”

“Oh come now, it’s not *purely* for entertainment’s sake. ” Nedzu tutted. “I simply don’t believe in interfering with a valuable learning experience for our students!”

“Translation: you want to see what happens next.” Midnight grinned. “So do I. It’s not everyday a couple of kiddos manage to trick a pro!”

Snipe sighed. “These young’uns are a different breed.”

“Yes.” Nedzu chirped happily. “Yes they are.”

Kyoka followed behind Midoriya and Shinso as they made their way through the warehouse. She knew it was just to set the mood, but the rows of broken down toys were definitely creepy. Midoriya glanced around and turned to her, “Can you hear anyone else here?”

Kyoka shook her head, “It’s just us.”

“So far.” Hitoshi corrected. “This place is gonna be crawling with people pretty soon, so we better find a good hiding spot.”

Kykoa sidestepped a broken jack in the box and shivered, “Why are we here again?”

“Because it’s the hand off point for the ransom objective.” Izuku answered. “A villain managed to kidnap the target during the initial rush, but we can ignore the victim, she’s not the objective. The money

is."

"So there's going to be a trade." Jiro asked. "And we're going to swoop in and steal the money."

Midoriya and Shinso exchanged a significant glance and Midioriya hesitated before answering, "...yes."

Kyoka huffed, "There's something else going on, isn't there."

Midoriya smiled, "Of course there is!"

"Ok." Kyoka held in her frustration. "So what is it?"

"That's for us to worry about." Shinso smirked. "Don't worry, it's all part of the plan."

Kykoa glared at them, "You know, you two are really starting to get on my nerves. Why are you always so cryptic?"

"That just means it's working." Midoriya answered, which didn't clear anything up at all. "Now come on, we've got two different groups of villains, plus a group of civilians showing up. We gotta find a good place to watch."

They climbed a rickety set of stairs up to landing and Shinso picked the lock to what was probably supposed to be an office space, but was really just a medium sized room with a desk. It had a medium sized window that overlooked the rest of the warehouse and Midoriya frowned as he looked at the glass, "Well, *that's* not gonna work."

"Yeah, no. Can't snipe through that." Shinso pulled out his gun. "You might want to cover your ears."

Kyoka hurried to cover her ears as he aimed at the class. There was a loud bang and kyoka flinched as a paintball exploded against the glass, splattering red paint all over it, but not breaking it. The three of them stared at the window for a long moment before Shinso broke the silence, "Well that didn't work."

"You were trying to break the glass, right?" Kyoka asked.

"Yep." Midoriya walked over to inspect the window. "Well, it made a few cracks at least."

Kyoka covered her ears against as Midoriya took out a knife and rammed the butt end of it into the window where the bullet had hit. It

took longer than she would have liked, but eventually the window shattered with a crash.

Midoriya put away his knife and shook out his hand, “good enough?”

Shinso nodded. “Good enough.”

Denki and his mom arrived at the warehouse just before the time Nedzu had given them. He wasn’t sure *what* exactly was going to happen, but he *did* know that there was going to be an objective up for grabs. That meant, however, that there were probably going to be other villains.

“So Sparky.” Mom grinned. “We’re here. Where do you want to…”

She was cut off by a loud crash from inside the warehouse and they exchanged a quick glance before dashing inside. Denki looked around, ready to fight whatever heroes or other villains might come at them but nothing happened. Nobody came rushing at them or tried to attack them, probably because nobody was there.

“Uh….” Denki straightened up. “That was weird, right?”

Mom nodded “Very. Come on. We should hide before everyone else arrives.”

Denki followed, but couldn't help but wonder if everyone else had arrived already.

Izuku, Hitoshi and Jiro ducked behind the wall under what was left of the window, panting as they listened to the pair of eclectic villains find a hiding spot.

“That.” Izuku swallowed. “That was way too close.”

“I don’t know why it’s such a big deal.” Jiro said. “Aren’t we waiting for those other people to arrive? “

“First of all”Izuku raised his finger. “The timing’s not right. Second of all, that lady is not the kind of person we want to fight head on.”

Jiro raised an eyebrow. “Why not?”

“Well, Izuku’s been digging up whatever he can on everyone involved in the exercise and *that* woman,” Hitoshi whispered, “is a pro hero in

her daily life.”

Jiro paled, which Izuku thought was the appropriate reaction. The only reason he’d felt confident enough to even invite them was because there was going to be so much else going on and it would give them a chance to take her out of the game as early as possible. Now that they’d potentially lost the element of surprise.

“Dang it.” Izuku muttered and pushed himself away from the wall.

The meeting’s happening any minute Izuku.” Hitoshi hissed. “Where are you going?”

Izuku grabbed his phone, “to call in reinforcements.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: January 12, 2022 (MST)

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So,” Nejire asked, “do you think any of the big bad villains will be making a move tonight?”

“I hope not.” Tamaki shivered. “But with our luck almost definitely.”

“I dunno, it’s been kind of a slow patrol.” Mirio pointed out.

The three of them had been walking the streets for about an hour now, so far they hadn't run into any villains at all. Mirio figured they must all be laying low and planning their next moves. It made for a nice quiet night.

Mirio felt his phone vibrate in his pocket and dug it out. “Who’s calling me this week? Everybody knows I’m busy doing the exercise, even Sir!”

“It must be a spam call.” Nejirie shrugged.

“Or a villain.” Tamaki added unhelpfully.

“Oh stop being such a worry wart Tamaki.” Nejire said. “Answer it!”

Mirio shrugged and picked up the call, “Hello?”

There was a long moment of silence on the ether end, “Hello? Is anyone there?”

“Is this LeMillion?”

Mirio blinked in surprise, then grinned, “Yep! You’ve got the right guy! What can I do for you?”

“There’s a villain fight at the toy warehouse.” The voice hesitantly whispered. “Come quickly, please!”

“What?” Tmkai and Nejiri looked at him curiously, but Mirio just shrugged. “Who is this?”

“Someone who wants to help.” the voice sounded young and was choked with tears. “Please! They can’t find out that I’m helping you!”

The kid hung up and Mirio frowned, putting his phone back into his pocket as he turned back to his friends.

“So who was it?” Nejirie asked.

I don’t know. Mirio answered thoughtfully. “But I think we should head to the toy warehouse.”

Denki couldn’t shake the feeling that they weren’t alone. Maybe it was that crash earlier or maybe it was the fact that mom was still being hypervigilant. Either way, it was kinda creeping him out.

There was a moment near the doorway and Denki peeked out from behind a pile of boxes. A small group was walking in, looking around the apparently empty warehouse with suspicion. One of them, a balding man with a suit, was clutching a large briefcase with a #8 emblazoned on the front.

Mom grinned and poked Denki in the ribs, It’s go time.”

What?” Denki exclaimed quietly. “But the hostage…”

“Isn't’ the objective.” Mom finished for him. “The money is. We already have one unknown group here, let’s not wait for more enemies to show up.”

Mom leapt out from behind the boxes, with Denki close on her heels.

Izuku sowled and jumped into action as soon as the other villains moved. He’d been hoping that the villains would show up first and give them a little bit more time to prepare, but apparently they weren’t that lucky. He exchanged a look with Shinso and they both leapt into action. Izuku grabbed a gun from his side and saw Hitohsi doing the same thing beside him. They just needed to keep Electra from getting the briefcase for now. Everything else could wait a few minutes.

Jiro saw what they were about to do and slammed her hands over her ears just before the two of them stood up and fired through the broken windows. Their aim wasn’t excellent, but it was good enough that they were able to at least hit the guy carrying the objective. A few

seconds later, he dropped both the briefcase and his token. Electra turned to look up and Iuku and hitoshi ducked behind the wall as electricity arced over their heads.

Hitoshi grabbed Jiro's hand and pulled her along as they all started running.

Denki's eyes widened as the air filled with paintballs. None of them hit *him,* thank goodness, but the civilian holding the briefcase went down in seconds. Mom at least had the presence of mind to throw some electricity at whoever was shooting at them and the bullets stopped after that, so Denki assumed she must have hit whoever it was. He made a mad lunge for the objective, but the door slammed open with a bang and he stumbled. Everyone looked toward the door to see a villain with rose vines growing out of him standing in the doorway, looking at the chaos. The hostage in his arms looked terrified but unharmed and Denki was momentarily relieved before he remembered that he was supposed to be the villain here, not the hero. He lunged for the objective again but was stopped as one of the vines wrapped around his ankle and pulled him back. He yelped when his electricity lit the vine on fire and he scrambled back as quick as he could before the villain could recover.

"I'm gonna go after the shooters!" Mom yelled. " You hold down the fort here."

"Um…ok!" Denki nodded in determination. "You can count on me!"

Mom smiled "That's my boy I'll be right back. "

Izuku stopped in his tracks as he heard Electra yell, "They're splitting up."

"Looks like it." Hitoshi nodded, "and I can practically see the gears spinning in that big ol' brain of yours, so spit it out. What do you have in mind?"

Izuku looked around, "Well it's gonna take all of us and…"

He was cut off by a shout, "Heroes are here, everybody scram!"

Izuku grinned, "perfect timing."

Electra hurried up the stairs and looked around. The room seemed

mostly empty except for two boys at the far end. Those must be the shooters. She made a beeline toward them when she felt a dull stabbing pain on the back of her neck. She whirled around to see a girl standing there and she started charging up an attack when a voice stopped her in her tracks.

“Do you know where your son is?”

Her heart rate skyrocketed and she whirled back around toward the boys. The taller one had disappeared and electra panicked. “What did you do to him?”

“Nothing.” The boy smiled and raised his gun. “Yet.”

Electra couldn’t move. Her heart was going a million miles a minute and all she could think about was all the different terrible things the missing villain could be doing to her son. She should never have left him. What if…

She hardly even noticed when the young man in front of her pulled the trigger.

By the time Mirio, Tamaki, and Nejire arrived, the villain fight was already in full swing. There was red paint everywhere that looked eerily like blood and the air was full of electricity and vines as the villains hashed it out. Tamaki steeled his limited courage as he tried to figure out what was going on. The villain with the thorns had a girl tied up in his vines, so Tamaki made her rescue his first priority. He manifested some octopus that he’d eaten that morning with his right hand and a glam shell in his left. The kidnapper only took his eyes off tamaki for a second to see where Mirio and Neijere were going, but it was enough for tamaki to knock the villain over the head with the clam shell. The villain crumpled to the ground and the vines loosened just enough for Tamaki to pull the hostage to safety.

Denki was feeling a little overwhelmed. When Mom had left, it had been him against the rose villain, but now it was him, the rose villain and three heroes.

Yeah, not fun.

“Psst, over here.”

Denki jumped when he realized there was someone gesturing to him

from the shadows. It was one of the boys he'd remembered seeing when they'd first shown up, the one with the purpose on his costume instead of green. And Denki froze. Was he trying to help him?

"Come on." the kid insisted. "We gotta get outta here! Do you *want* to fight these heroes?"

"But…" Denki looked up the stairs where mom had disappeared. "My mom…"

"My friends are heading to help her right now." the kid said. "But you can't help anyone if you're dead or arrested."

Denki gulped, but only hesitated another second before running after the kid, who started weaving around the boxes almost faster than Denki could follow. It took everything he had just to keep up.

"Calm her down." Izuku ordered. "Now that she's out of the exercise, we don't need to worry about her getting away."

Jiro nodded and Electra gradually calmed down, blinking as her heart rate went back to normal. She blinked for a moment as she thought through what just happened and she looked at Izuku in disbelief, "Did you really just kill me?"

"I had to take you out early." Izuku explained simply. "A pro hero is just too big of a factor to leave in the game."

Electra nodded in respect, "Smart. I hate it, but I can see where you're coming from. Now, uh, the staff wants me to leave my token here so…"

She grabbed her token from her pocket and Izuku snatched it out of her hand, "I, uh, actually need this."

Electra frowned, "Why?"

Izuku gave her a shaky smile, "Uh…I can't really tell you."

She crossed her arms, "Why not?"

Izuku pocketed the token and gestured for Jiro to follow, "Because you'd try to stop me."

Tamaki looked over the hostage to make sure she was alright and then turned back to the fight. Neijere and mirio had managed to subdue the other group that had been fighting the rose villain, but the electric villain they'd seen earlier must have slipped away while they were all busy with the others.

"Um, guys…" Tamaki yelled quietly. "I think we lost one!"

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: January 19, 2022 (MST)

Deception

Chapter Summary

There are many ways to do friendship.

Chapter Notes

Art!
BitchAssWitch(Winter)

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kyoka ran a little ahead of Midoriya as they left the warehouse behind. That had been the most chaotic thing she'd ever experienced, but even so,

Kyoka skidded to a stop when she heard a gun cock behind her, "Midoriya, what are you doing?"

"Making sure you understand the plan." Midoriya said simply.

Kyoka hummed skeptically, "And why does that require pointing a gun at me?"

"It's insurance, just in case you don't agree." Midoriya explained. "And so you know what will happen if you don't follow the plan."

"Oh?" Kyoka asked. "And what is the plan?"

"You're not going to tell Sparky that we're the ones who killed his mom." Midoriya began.

"Well, obviously not." Kyoka scoffed. "I thought Shinso was offing him right now."

"No. He's more useful alive." Midoriya said thoughtfully. "A quirk like that has so much potential and I want to see what he can do with it."

Kyoka slowly turned to look at him, "Then why not keep them both alive?"

"Because I can't manipulate a pro hero." Midoirya siad. "At least, not

for long. Her son, however, is a different story."

"So you're going to use him?" Kyoka asked. "And then what?"

"That depends on how long he stays useful." Midoriya shrugged. "We told you before the exercise even began that we didn't care who we stabbed in the back."

"Yeah, and you weren't lying." Kyoka sighed. "So what? If I tell him you killed his Mom, you'll kill me?"

"Yep." Midoriya smiled. "And since he won't listen to us if he knows, then…"

"Then you'll kill him too." Kyoka finished. "You're not giving me much of a choice here, are you?"

"Well," Midoriya gestured to the gun. "You do have two options."

Kyoka thought for a moment. She might be able to control him into letting her go, but Midoriya had eyes everywhere and it wouldn't take him long to find ehr again. And that was only if she could get away in the first place. He seemed to know how her quirk worked even better than she did, so he probably had already come up with a way to counter it.

It seemed like a jerk move to lie to Sparky like that, but at the same time, why was she here? Her main goal, really her *only* goal, was to practice using One for All and learn how to use it better, so it only made sense to stick around as long as she could and get advice from the crazy quirk analyst, even if he was currently threatening her with a gun. Plus, she was supposed to be acting like a villain anyway, right?"

"So?" Midoriya prompted. "Are we on the same page?"

Kyoka deflated, "Yeah. Now can we get going? We're wasting time."

"Ok, did we accidentally hire middle school mob bosses?" Mic threw his hands up in the air. "Like, where did we even get these kids?"

"They volunteered." Aizawa shot back.

"They look like they're having fun, at least" Midnight pointed out.

Cementoss grimaced, "I'm not sure that's a good thing. Look at how

easily they took out a pro hero. If they decided to become real villains…"

"Well then, it is a good thing they've applied to our hero course, then!" Nedzu chirped.

Aizawa groaned, "Problem children."

Toshinori listened to the exchange nervously. He was starting to regret approving young Jiro's participation in the exercise. The more he thought about it, the more it seemed like a terrible idea for the future symbol of peace to pretend to be a villain for a week. He had thought that she wouldn't be too impacted by it, seeing as she was a future hero, but this villain duo, Shadows, had come out of nowhere and knocked the entire plan off the rails.

He tapped on Gran Torino's shoulder nervously and gestured toward the hall. The old geezer rolled his eyes, but followed Toshinori when he stood and left. He could feel Nedzu's curious eyes on them, and that made him as nerovus as ever, but he was the symbol of peace. He wasn't about to be stopped just because the principal might judge him.

The door snapped shut behind them and Gran Torino crossed his arms, "So Toshinori, what is this about, we're missing the show!"

"I'm concerned about Young Jiro." Toshinori answered honestly. "I think we should instruct her to pull out of the exercise."

"We can't do that and you know it." Gran Torino shook his head. "What, you can't stand to see your successor threatened? You know that as a hero she'll face danger all the time."

"It's not that…"

"Ah, so it's those boys." Gran smiled teasingly. *"The Shadows."*

"They're corrupting her!" Toshinori insisted. "They…they're downright villainous!"

"Which is what the exercise calls for." Gran held his hands up in surrender. "Look, I don't know what those boys have planned or what they're trying to accomplish, but that green kid is a genius when it comes to quirks, and with her new quirk development, having a brainwasher to guide her is invaluable. Are you really considering taking her away from a resource like that?"

Toshinori sagged his shoulders, “Why did it have to be brainwashing? It’s so…”

“Stop right there.” Gran interrupted. “If you judge her or start calling her a villain just because of the manifestation of the quirk that *you* gave her, then you may as well quit your job as a teacher now.”

“I…”

“You nothing.” Gran punched his arm. “You’ve got a lot to learn about teaching and working with teenagers, got it? So why don’t you sit back and learn something for once?”

“I…you’re right.” Toshinori surrendered. “Let’s go back inside.”

Denki wasn’t sure what to think of his new…friend? Ally? Person who had saved him from a group of superheroes?

“Hey!" Now that they were a street or two away from the fight, and his new companion had taken off his mask, Denki wasn’t as afraid of actually *talking* to his rescuer. “You never told me you name!”

The kid stopped running and gave Denki an appraising glance. “You can call me Shadows for now.”

“That’s such a cool name!” Denki grinned as Shadows *almost* smiled. “Does that mean I'll get your real name later?”

“Maybe.” Shadows said evasively. “And you. You’re sparky, right?”

Denki blushed, “That’s just what Mom calls me. My name is Kaminari.”

Shadows looked around, “The rendezvous point is just a little farther. Come on, let’s get going. The others will be there soon. “

He started running again and Denki scrambled after him, “So who are these *others* ? Are they the same friends who are helping my mom?”

“Yep.” shadows skidded to a stop and lifted up a manhole cover, “This is the place.”

Denki gulped, “This place is almost as creepy as you are dude.”

“I’ll take that as a complement.” Shadows sounded like he was smiling. “We had to find someplace the heroes wouldn’t look.”

Shadows didn't say anything else, just jumped down into the tunnel and expected denki to follow, but that just made Denki even *more* curious about the whole thing. Just who was this kid? He seemed around the same age as Denki, but Shadows just gave off this air of mystery that was just as intriguing as it was intimidating.

"Hey, uh…do you know who was shooting at us earlier?" Denki asked. "That was pretty scary too"

Shadows waited a moment before answering, "There were people shooting? I think we arrived after that."

"Oh." Denki frowned. "They're who my mom went after, so I was just curious."

There was the sound of soft footsteps above them and Denki tensed as someone removed the manhole cover. Two people dropped down, a shorter kid whose outfit matched Shadows and an attractive girl with purple hair. He waited a moment for his mom to drop down after them, but she didn't. Maybe Shadows had other friends who were helping her. He seemed cool enough that he must have tons of friends.

"How did it go?" Shadows asked "Any issues?"

"The heroes didn't see us." the boy reported. "I never thought i'd be grateful for having to avoid bullies, but I gotta say, it's effective stealth practice."

"So you guys are Shadow's friends?" Denki interrupted. "So when are the others getting here?"

Shinso frowned, "Others?"

"Yeah," Denki said. "The ones who were supposed to be helping my mom?"

The boy's face fell and he reached into his pocket, "I'm sorry…the heroes. We just weren't fast enough."

He took his hand out of his pocket and Denki's blood ran cold as he recognized his mom's token, "They…they killed her?!"

"Heroes…especially young ones, aren't the best at controlling their powers." The boy grimaced. "I…I don't think they meant to, but it was just enough for the teachers to call it a fatality."

“That's…” Denki took the token, “but she’s so strong!”

“I’m sorry.” Shadows put a hand on his shoulder. “We need to get moving. Once the heroes finish off the villains at teh warehouse, they’ll be coming after us next.”

“Right.” Denki wiped his eyes to get rid of the beginnings of tears and nodded. “Shadows is right. We should get moving.”

“Shadows?” the girl slapped Shadows’ arm, “You only gave him your villain name?”

Shadows shrugged, “He didn’t need to know.”

The girl rolled her eyes. “I’m sorry. These two like to call themselves Shadows, but they also enjoy being needlessly ominous and mysterious all the time. The tall one is Shinso and the short one is Midoriya. Don’t get on either of their bad sides.”

“Oh? And now who’s being needlessly ominous?” Shadows, Shinso, shot back.

“What can I say? Jiro smiled. “I learned from the best. Now let’s get out of here.”

Mirio was tired by the time they got back to the hero agency. They’d figured out that most of the people they’d taken down weren’t villains at all, but instead civilians who had gotten caught up in a hostage situation, so they’d probably get points docked for that. They *had* managed to take down the rose villain, but even after searching several blocks surrounding the warehouse, they weren’t able to find the electric villain or the one who’d shot up the place. All that and they only had one arrest and an objective to protect. It was ok though, that’s more than they would have had without the anonymous tip, so Mirio supposed they had a new ally going for them as well.

“Guys! Thank goodness you’re back!” Shin ran up to them as they walked in the door. “We found Hanzou’s token. He’s dead!”

Chapter End Notes

There is no longer an update schedule for this fic.

Strategy

Chapter Summary

Preparation and Investigation.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Pyro

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X

How had this week gone so wrong so quickly? Electra was supposed to be spending the entire week with Denki and teaching all about hero work and instead, she was being escorted to a waiting room for the rest of the week while her kid was out there alone, probably terrified and with no idea what to do next. It was about the worst way their bonding activity could have gone, honestly.

The clone of Ectoplasm that had picked her up opened the door to the waiting room and gave her what was probably supposed to be a reassuring smile, but really came out as more of a grimace and Electra gave him the same expression before walking inside. The waiting room was fairly large, with a lot of couches, beanbags and carpets for people to sit on and there were a couple large doors leading off to what looked like a kitchen and what was probably a sleeping area, and to her surprise there were already a few people there.

A kid with pink hair looked up excitedly and vaulted over the couch toward her, “Hey! Hero, villain, or civilian?”

Electra frowned, “What?”

He gestured around the room, “Welcome to the dead room. It’s where they send everyone who gets taken out early, so I was just wondering what your role was. Here,” he held out his hand, “I’m Hiroshi Tameda. I was a civilian.”

After a moment, she shook his hand, “Electra Kaminari. I was one of the fake villains.”

Tameda grinned, “Cool! That means we’ve got the whole set! That shark boy over in the corner is one of the hero students, but, uh, he’s

not taking the whole death thing well."

"Neither am I, honestly." Electra sighed. "My son's still in the exercise. We were supposed to do it together, but…"

"You know you can check up on him right?" Tameda said. "After you die, you get to watch the rest of the exercise just like the teachers do."

"Really?" She hurried to follow Tameda as he led her back to the couch. "That's something at least."

"Yep!" Tameda dropped down onto the couch. "It's on a bit of a delay so you can see how you died, but uh, here!" He handed her a box with a pair of headphones and a remote. "Each of the screens has a number, so if you want to hear the audio, just enter the number on the remote. Now that that's out of the way, let's find your kid…"

He squinted at the wall of screens before grinning and pointing to one of them, "Hey! I found you!"

Electra looked at the screen he was pointing at and put on her headphones when she realized that she and Denki were walking to the warehouse. They were just talking about nothing, which was heartbreaking when she knew what was about to happen. She saw them rushing inside and then watched as she stupidly left her son and got herself killed. She had to admit that those kids were skilled, but it still stung for a pro hero to be taken out so easily.

"Ah, so you got taken out by the Shadows too." Tameda nodded. "They've taken out everyone who's died so far."

"Those two?" Electra frowned. "Really?"

"Yep." Tameda shrugged. "They got me before the heroes even got to the arena. I got killed by the purple one. You got killed by the green one, right?"

"Yeah." Electra nodded. "But it's the purple one I'm worried about."

"Oh, right, your son." Tameda squinted at the screen. "Well, they look like they're not going to kill him yet, or maybe they're just leading him away from the fight like they did with the hero. I honestly can't tell what they're going to do next."

Electra watched as the Shadows lied to her son and told him that the heroes had killed her. Denki trusted them, of course, he'd always been

so trusting. It was one of his most admirable qualities! But now she was terrified that he'd lose it. Once he realized that Shadows had killed her…well, she'd just have to be here to help him pick up the pieces. It was supposed to be a *bonding* activity after all. She'd just hoped it would be a bit more on the positive side, but she'd work with what she had.

Shadows led Denki and that other girl to their apartment to get some sleep before day two and Electra forced herself to at least try to sleep on one of the beanbags so she'd be alert in the morning. She didn't dare go to the sleeping room yet, not until Denki was actually safe. She couldn't do much for her kid from beyond the grave, but she *could* watch over him until he "died" too.

She just knew it wouldn't be enough.

Tamaki couldn't think, he could hardly breath as the panic set in.

"What do you mean Hanzou's dead?!" Nejire gasped. "We were just with him this morning!"

"How do you know he's dead?" Mirio asked.

"I used my quirk to find his token." Shin grimaced, "You know how the teachers said that if we die in the exercise we're supposed to just leave our token on the ground? Well, we found his token, but Hanzou was nowhere to be seen."

Mirio nodded numbly, "Do we know who killed him?"

Shin shook his head, "No idea. There weren't any clues at the scene besides…well, red paint. It, um, it didn't look good. According to the rules of the exercise, we basically just found his corpse."

Tamaki gulped, "We need to do an investigation, don't we?"

Shin nodded, "Everyone's having a meeting right now. You three are the last ones we were waiting on."

They silently followed Shin to the meeting room. Even Nejire was quiet, which somehow made Tamaki more nervous than the fact that one of their classmates had just died. When they got to the meeting room, Mirio pushed open the door and Tamaki almost stumbled backwards at the sheer chaos happening inside. It seemed like everyone was yelling at each other and several people were almost

coming to blows.

“What do you mean you don’t know what he was doing?!”

“He was finding a lost kid, how is that on me?!”

“Well you should have kept track of him better!”

Beside him, Mirio took a deep breath, “Everyone stop fighting!” A shocked silence fell over their class. “Look, I’m sure there’s a lot of things we could have done differently, but the most important thing right now is to find out who killed Hanzou so that it doesn’t happen again.”

“Right.” Shindo nodded once. “But, uh, not to be a downer, but how do you suggest we do that? There were literally no clues.”

Mirio thought back to the mysterious kid who had called them earlier. His information had panned out, and he sounded like he had an in with the villains, so…he shook his head. He didn’t want to put the kid in danger, so he would only use that as a last ditch option, “I don’t know, but we’re the heroes here! We’ll think of something!”

It felt like Kyoka had just barely gotten to sleep when she felt Shinso shaking her awake. She glared at him, still barely awake, but he just smirked at her and moved on to Kaminari. Kyoka groaned and rubbed the sleep dust from her eyes as she looked for Midoriya, only to somewhat regret it when she found him. He had a permanent marker in his hand and was writing on the walls like some deranged mad scientist which, from what she knew of him, probably wasn’t too far from the truth. She couldn’t even decipher half of what was written, but she recognized some of the objectives and there were lines leading to different places on the wall that had what Kyoka was pretty sure were names.

“Uh…” Kaminari sounded just as freaked out as she felt. “Dude, what’s Midoriya doing?”

“Don’t worry about it.” Midoriya said quickly, capping the marker. “Are you two ready to train?”

“Now?!” Kaminanari shot her a glance, “Uh, we did just kinda wake up.”

Shinso shrugged, “Maybe, but there’s not really a lot of time to waste.

We have a lot planned today and we don't have time to spend the whole time with you two."

"Hitoshi! Don't be rude!" Midoriya hissed. "But yeah, we don't have a lot of time today, but I *really* want to experiment with both of your quirks first!"

Kyoka was still exhausted, but didn't really trust him not to shoot her if she didn't agree, so she sighed and stood up, "Fine, whatever. Let's do this."

"Wait, we're really just jumping straight to training?!" Kaminari scrambled to his feet. "Like, right now?"

"Yep." Shinso grinned. "Got a problem with that?"

Midoriya didn't wait for them to respond before launching a barrage of questions at Kaminari, "Can you direct your electricity? How much can you produce? How much hand to hand do you know?"

Denki's eyes widened like a deer in the headlights and Shinso put a hand on Midoriya's shoulder, "Slow down, Izuku. Give him a chance to answer first. Or better yet, just fight him and you can see for yourself."

"Right." Midoirya nodded and ran forward. "Good idea."

"What?!" Kaminari stumbled backwards and started sparking. "Now?"

Midoriya ducked around him to avoid the electricity and Shinso smirked, "Do you really think villains will wait for you to be ready, Sparky?"

"Ok, ok!" Kaminari eyed Izuku suspiciously as he grabbed the marker he'd been using earlier. "Get ready! Special attack, 1 million volts!"

"Whoa!" Midoriya froze midway through throwing the marker. "HItoshi! Stop him!"

"Already on it."

Even after Kaminari had gone limp under Shinso's hold, the air around them was still charged enough for Kyoka's hair to stand completely on end. Kaminari was really powerful and she shuddered as she thought about what might have happened if Shinso hadn't been able to stop him in time.

“Drop your control.” Midoriya ordered.

Kaminari blinked, “What just happened?”

Shinso gave him a completely done look, “I just stopped you from seriously injuring all of us.”

“Ok, I know some of your limits now.” Midoriya hurried to grab a notebook.

“A-already?!” Kaminari stuttored. “But I didn’t even get to do anything!”

Midoriya was so caught up in his thoughts that he didn’t even seem to hear him, “Ok, so we need to work on quirk control and using small increments of electricity so that you don’t have to go straight for the nuclear option. Battle awareness too, that’s going to be important, and also, since we’re being villains here, you’re gonna need to stop calling out your attacks and…”

He kept talking and Kyoka sighed, “Welcome to the team.”

Tips

Chapter Summary

The stage gets set.

Chapter Notes

Memes!
X X X X X X

Electra watched as the green shadow, Midoriya, glanced between Denki and the giant web of plans he'd drawn out on the wall. She knew that Denki didn't have the *best* control over his quirk, she'd been meaning to help him with it but between hero work and everything else, it had just kept getting pushed down the list and she just hadn't gotten around to it yet. UA would help him eventually as well, but Denki had obviously been working on a lot of his own too if he could already produce a million volts! She'd been mad honestly, when shadows stopped him before he had a chance to let off his move. It would have been a great way to take down the villains that killed her but…electra sighed and turned up the volume, but Denki didn't even know that they were the ones that killed her.

"There's no time." Midoriya said suddenly.

Denki frowned and glanced toward the others, "no time for what?"

"For you to learn hand to hand." Midoriya said, like it was obvious, "your electricity surrounds your body like a shield, right? Right. And since you immediately went nuclear, I'm assuming you can't really shoot it out unless there's a lot of it, hence the unsafely high voltage you tried to attack us with. So the best course of action is going to be to improve your combat skills so you can actually get close enough to shock your target without going over whatever limit you have to have, but…" Midoriya shrugged uselessly, "But there's no time."

For how little that boy had seen of Denki's quirk, his analysis was surprisingly accurate, even if she didn't necessarily agree on the course of action. Sure, denki couldn't shoot out his electricity *yet,* but that didn't mean he wouldn't be able to, he just needed some more training, which he would get at UA. There was tons of time!

"Izuku's right." The purple shadow, Shinso, said, folding his arms as

he leaned against the wall. “We have a lot of plans for today and even though it’d be fun, we don’t have time to hold your hands all day.”

The girl, Jiro, rolled her eyes, “You do realize we’re not asking you to, right?”

Shinso smirked, “Maybe we think you need it.”

“There’s gotta be something we can do.” Midoriya muttered. “There has to be some sort of attack that you can learn quickly that uses a low enough voltage that you’re not going all out every single time you fight. And we should take into account who you’ll be working with, so maybe…” Midoriya’s head jerked upwards and his eyes flicked rapidly between the other three. “Oh…that might work.”

“Uh, Izuku?” Shinso huffed in amusement, “Care to share with the rest of the class?”

Midoriya got a big grin on his face, “You’re a brainwasher. Jiro can control people’s emotions through their heartbeats. And electricity? Electricity controls the muscles.” Izuku pointed at Denki. “Body.” he pointed at Jiro. “Heart.” and finally he pointed at Shinso. “And Mind.”

“Uh…” Denki looked a little overwhelmed. “What?”

“Come here.” Midoriya waved him closer. “Let’s experiment and see if this is even possible.”

Electra’s jaw dropped as she watched Midoriya talk Denki through a new usage of his quirk. It wasn’t something that she had ever even considered, but would have so many applications in hero work if he could master it. Maybe…maybe her kid getting kidnapped by the Shadows wouldn’t be *all* bad.

Hanzou’s murder was a dead end, not that the students had figured that out yet. Nedzu sipped his tea as he watched the students search for clues that the Shadows hadn’t left behind. It was a frustrating lesson in cold cases, but one that they would have had to learn eventually. They were doing decently well, all things considered, even if there were perhaps opportunities for improvement. They needed to take a step back, for one, and look at the bigger picture, but they were scared and confused, so he wasn’t going to grade them too harshly on that little detail. At least, not yet.

While the second years were busy looking for things they wouldn’t

find, the Shadows were once again proving that the staff shouldn't have underestimated them. It was impressive how quickly Midoriya had discovered the weaknesses of Kaminari's quirk and the way he had used the other two's quirks as inspiration had just been positively delightful. Nedzu took another sip of tea and smirked when he realized that Aizawa was glaring at him. It didn't surprise him that Aizawa had noticed his excitement, in fact, Nedzu would have been disappointed if he *hadn't* caught on.

After a moment, Aizawa heaved a sigh, "You can read those plans on the wall, can't you?"

"Oh, mostly." Nedzu set down his cup. "Midoriya's annotation technique could be improved to make it a bit more concise and easy to understand, especially when he is working in a team, but his intent is clear enough for the most part."

"And, you're already making personalized lesson plans for him." Aizawa groaned. "I wish I was surprised, but I'm really not."

Nedzu chuckled, "As if you're not doing the same. Two heroes who focus on stealth and logical ruses? I'm surprised I haven't seen adoption papers already."

"I've been busy." Aizawa rolled his eyes. "What do you think of their methods?"

"They're no more nontraditional than yours, Eraserhead." Nedzu pointed out. "Although, I am curious as to how they plan to apply these tactics to hero work, assuming that is their plan. I'd love to pick their brains after this whole thing is over. Ah! It looks like they're splitting up again!"

Aizawa narrowed his eyes, "I would have thought they'd stay together a little longer."

"Not if they want to be ready for tomorrow." Nedzu giggled with excitement. "There's just too much to do."

"So…" Denki broke the silence as they walked away from the apartment. "What do you think of the Shadows."

"They're creepy as hell, but they're good at what they do." Kyoka said. "I just wish I knew what they were after. One minute, they're killing heroes and the next they're agreeing to train us for no other reason

than Midoriya finds our quirks interesting. And I still havn't seen them go after a single objective."

Kaminari stopped walking, "Wait really?! I thought you guys were after the ransom money."

"Uh…" Kyoka paused to collect her thoughts. "...no. they had *other* goals. And even if they didn't, the heroes ended up with the objective anyway, so it doesn't even matter."

Kaminari hummed, "I wonder what their goal was."

"No idea." Kyoka said quickly. "Those two are a mystery. How much farther?"

"I think it's just down that stairwell up ahead." Kaminari glanced at his phone. "Yeah, it looks like that's the place Shadows described."

"Alright then," Kyoka sighed and started down the stairs, "let's get this over with."

She pushed open the door and her eyes zeroed in on the guy at the counter, who looked up as they came in, "Well hello there! How can I help you?"

"We need weapons." Kaminari grinned. "Some friends of ours told us you're the place to go."

The guy got a wicked glint in his eyes, "Well, then, your friends told you right. What can I get for you?"

"It feels kind of weird betraying our friends." Izuku sighed as he added a few more scribbles to his mad scientist wall. "I mean, I know we haven't known them for very long and it was always the plan to either get them turned in or kill them, but it still feels kind of underhanded, you know?"

"It's not like they're actually our friends." Hitoshi pointed out. "They only trust us in this exercise because we're all acting like villains and they don't know you're quirkless. The minute this is all over, they're going to hate us just like everyone else."

"Probably." Izuku shrugged. "I wish it could be different though. They're fun and they've both got such cool quirks!"

"You think everyone has cool quirks." Hitoshi said. "I don't know, I

like them just fine, but it's easier to get close to someone when I know that *I'm* going to be the one betraying *them.* "

Izuku gave him a look, "That's kinda sad."

"But you get it." Hitoshi said.

"Unfortunately, ys." Izuku turned back to his planning. "After everyone that's hurt us, it's kind of nice to know that they won't stab us in the back, if only because we'll be the ones to turn on them first."

"Yep. But we don't know exactly when Shin will turn them in, so we still have a couple of days to make use of them." Hitoshi nodded and grabbed the backpack that had his villain outfit. "Anyway, you've got the Hotta Bros and I've got the gang, right?"

"Right." Izuku hurried over to his laptop and pulled out a flashdrive. "This should turn off the alarms while notifying the heroes, just, uh, don't tell them about that little fun fact."

Hitoshi smirked, "Wouldn't dream of it."

There were exactly zero clues and it was totally beyond frustrating. They'd been searching all night for Hanzou's murderer and there was absolutely nothing to point toward whoever killed him. Even the security camera footage was a dead end! It had been looped right before Hanzou had disappeared to find a lost child and they hadn't been able to find him on the cameras anytime after that. They didn't even have a time of death to narrow it down!

"I don't know guys." Ogawa grimaced. "Maybe we should focus on finding the other villains."

"We can't just abandon him!" Nejire gasped.

"Yeah." Shindo agreed. "What about revenge?"

"Heroes shouldn't be obsessed with that kind of stuff!"

Neijire frowned and turned to Mirio, "You've been oddly quiet. What's going on in that crazy head of yours?"

Mirio startled, "I…it's nothing."

"It's obviously not nothing." Nejire rolled her eyes. "So come on! Spill!"

Mirio hesitated, “It’s just…do you remember that phone call we got? The one that told us about the ransom objective?”

“We don't know if we can trust them.” Amajiki argued.

“But they *did* have good information.” Mirio hummed. “And that means that they *might* know something about who killed Hanzou.”

“Well then why didn’t you say so before?!” Shindo said. “Let’s call them!”

Mirio’s shoulders slumped, “Yeah. I think that’s our only option.”

Izuku smiled when his phone rang and he saw Togata’s number on the caller ID. He put on a nervous voice as he answered, “H-hello?”

“Hi there.” Togata’s voice echoed over the receiver. “I’m sorry to call you, but I was hoping you had some information for me.”

Izuku’s smile turned into a full grin. Hook, line, and sinker.

Strings

Chapter Summary

Just Izuku and Hitoshi being cool info brokers.

Chapter Notes

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hitoshi kept his hands in his pockets as he walked toward the self proclaimed Blue Dogs Gang's hideout, or what was left of them after their leader had been arrested the first day while going after objective #8, the bank. The other two members of the gang were still going strong though and had managed to hold onto the bank objective even without their leader. They were competent, that much was clear. And that meant that they were a threat, so if everything went smoothly, they would be out of the game by the end of the day.

It was the same reason why Hitoshi and Izuku had sent Jiro and Kaminari to the pawn shop for their weapons. He and Izuku didn't have nearly enough training to take down everyone by themselves, at least, not yet, so the most logical option was to get the right information to the right people and let things run their course from there.

The hideout was just a few streets away, so Hitoshi ducked into the nearest building, which was really just a storefront with a few racks of thrift store finds to represent a whole clothing department. A single civilian employee was reading a book at the counter, but he looked up as Hitoshi walked in, the door chiming a little tune as it opened.

"Uh…" Hitoshi shrugged awkwardly. "Bathrooms?"

The employee sighed, "They're in the back."

Hitoshi smiled and took control of him, "Thanks. Now forget I was ever here."

He kept his quirk activated as he looked around the store. It didn't take long to find the bathroom and he took note of a back entrance he could slip out of once he was dressed. Hitoshi changed as quickly as

he could, but it still took a few minutes, which was unfortunately just long enough for someone else to wander into the store.

Hitoshi cursed quietly when he heard the chime of the door opening. He shoved his mask on and slipped out of the backroom, keeping his footsteps silent and using the racks of clothing to stay as out of sight as he could. The employee was still brainwashed at the front, staring off into space with his book lying forgotten on the counter in front of him. Why did someone have to show up now?!

“Um sir?” a new voice asked hesitantly. “Um, are you ok?”

Hitoshi peeked around the clothing rack he was hiding behind to see the newcomer reach out and softly shake the employee. It wasn’t quite hard enough to loosen Hitoshi’s control, but it seemed like a natural time to drop it, so he did. The employee blinked and let out a forced chuckle, “Sorry, I must have zoned out there! How can I help you?”

From his hiding place, Hitoshi breathed a sigh of relief and made his way out the back door. It squeaked a little as he pushed it open, but even if the employee realized someone else was there, Hitoshi could just melt into the shadows in the alley behind the store and get away.

“Hey! Is someone there?”

Hitoshi let the door slam shut behind him and Hitoshi hurried down the alley. He’d spent enough time here already, it was time to talk to a gang.

For as many times that the Hotta Brothers had participated in this little exercise, they sure weren’t doing so hot this time around. Normally by this point they’d gotten at least one objective, but those heroes at the start had been on top of it! Eraser must be so proud of his kids.

Ichiro groaned, “What objective do you think we should go after next?”

“Which ones are even left?” Jiro asked. “Normally, a lot of them get picked up the first day.”

“I dunno. This exercise is different every year.” Ichiro shrugged. “There’s got to be some left, right?”

“I mean, yeah, but how do we find them?”

Ichiro's phone beeped and he frowned, "I thought I put that on silent." He pulled his phone out and checked the notification. "...ok, well that's not creepy at all."

"What?" Jiro came to look over his brother's shoulder, "Who's it from?"

"No idea." Ichiro said. "It's just a text: *would you like help finding your next objective?"*

"Whoa, these phones really are listening in on our conversations aren't they?" Jiro grimaced. "Because we *do* need help, but how does this person even know that…"

He trailed off as the phone beeped again and a message popped up: *It's not the phones that are listening ;)*

The brothers froze.

"Ok, yeah." Ichiro gulped. "Definitely creepy."

"Should we block the number?" Jiro asked. "I feel like we should block the number."

Ichiro nodded, but they both hesitated for a few seconds, just long enough for another text to come in: *But if you do that, I can't tell you where the drugs are!*

"Who are you?" Jiro glared at the phone. "Why do you want to help us?"

You can call me Shadows.

"That doesn't answer our second question." Ichiro pointed out. "Why do you want to help us?"

You're here just to annoy Eraserhead. Can you really judge my motivations?

They both winced at that and Ichiro sighed, "Alright, you got us. Where are the drugs?"

Why didn't Gran come and watch this every year? This was prime entertainment! And those Shadows kids were just *fun!* It was better than daytime television for sure. Nedzu was across the room from him and Gran could see the glint in the rat's eyes as he carefully evaluated

every move those two made and most likely came up with a million different scenarios for every possible outcome. As entertaining as watching Shadows was, though, he wasn't here to watch them. He was here to keep an eye on All Might's successor.

Gran couldn't have been able to predict the way that One for All would mutate her quirk, but Kyoka Jiro had spunk and she was doing well despite that. Of course, that was partially due to the Shadows' influence as well, but it was just luck that she'd been able to find a brainwasher to help her.

"She hasn't broken any bones yet." Recovery Girl hobbled over to the couch he was sitting on and eased herself down next to him. "In fact, no one's had any serious injuries yet. I'm starting to feel like a useless old woman!"

"Oh you could never be useless." Gran chuckled. "An old man like me, however…"

Recovery Girl hit his knee with her cane, "At least you've still got a couple brain cells left, unlike that student of yours. I swear, if he didn't have a heart of gold to make up for it, I'd have no idea how he became the number one hero."

"Meh, he's got a good head on his shoulders, he just doesn't always use it." Gran said. "Do you normally have a lot of injuries by this point?"

Recovery Girl nodded, "Tons! Normally, I've got at least three broken bones and a couple cases of quirk exhaustion and that's just the students, not even the villains they take down. Normally, though, I don't have a group of middle schoolers murdering people left and right."

Gran laughed loudly, "Just enjoy your break. Something tells me that you'll be working overtime later."

"What are you two talking about over there?" Mic called over. "I feel like I missed a joke!"

"We were just talking about how there's been fewer injuries this year." Recovery Girl answered.

"That's because it's all been psychological warfare." Snipe said. "These young'uns are all gonna need therapy after this."

“All of them.” Hound Dog cut in. “Did you hear the way Shadows were talking earlier? They expect everyone to turn on them.”

“They’re being logical.” Eraserhead said.

“And pessimistic.” Midnight argued. “No kids should be *expecting* their friends to turn on them!”

“Why don’t you go ahead and pencil them in for a few appointments, Hound Dog?” Nedzu said. “After what we’ve seen so far, we’ll need to evaluate their psychological state before we admit them into the hero course, so we might as well get a head start.”

Hound Dog nodded and Gran turned back to look at Jiro, who was currently lining up canisters of pepper spray while Kaminari tossed a metal baseball bat back and forth between his hands. Yeah, all these kids were gonna need therapy.

Hitoshi strode into the Blue Dogs hideout like he owned the place, “Nice place you got here, you do the decorating yourself?”

The lady that Izuku had told him had a knife quirk glared at him, “You’re the info broker this year, aren’t you.”

“That’s me!” Hitoshi gave a little bow. “I’m surprised you’ve heard of me, it’s only the second day!”

“Word gets around.” The guy said. “So, what do you have to offer?”

“Oh,” Hitoshi reached into his pocket and pulled out the flash drive. “Just a way to deactivate the security systems at the museum so you can get the crown. You can owe me a favor.”

The woman snatched the flashdrive right out of his hand, “Done. Now get outta here. Info brokers give me the creeps.”

Hitoshi smiled as he left. Mission accomplished.

Chapter End Notes

> This is what happens when I get rid of my update schedule. No updates for ten days and then suddenly two in a row!
>
> And may I just say that I hate that one of the Hotta brothers is canonically named Jiro?

Stakeout

Chapter Summary

The calm before the storm.

Chapter Notes

Art!
wormz

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X

Kyoka rubbed her head as she and Kaminari made their way back to the Shadow's apartment. Ever since she'd received One for All, it felt like the sound of it in her head was getting gradually louder and it was getting distracting. She kind of wished she'd been able to tell Midoriya about One for All, but All Might had warned her that the UA staff would be watching the entire time. Telling Midoriya was one thing, he was a quirk analyst and he and Shisnso had already proven how far they were willing to go to keep secrets when it came down to it, but the teachers? She didn't know any of them and she also didn't know who else was listening and All Might definitely wouldn't want news of his quirk getting out, so discussing One for All was entirely off the table.

That didn't mean she didn't need the help though. There was still so much about her new quirk that she didn't understand and One for All had so many different sounds and harmonies that were part of the overarching energy that she'd picked out at least eight different parts that sounded like their own melodies. All of them matched, sorta, but at the same time, they kinda really didn't. It was like a cacophony of energy that was meant to weave together, but something was missing and Kyoka couldn't figure out what it was.

She obviously had a lot more work to do.

"So…" Kaminari was obviously starting to get a little restless, based on the way he was skipping along beside her, "What do you like to do when you're not, you know, being a fake villain?"

Kyoka raised an eyebrow, "How do you know I'm not being a real villain?"

Kaminari gave her a look, “Now you’re the one being needlessly ominous.”

Kyoka laughed, “Uh, music.”

“Oh!” Kaminari grinned. “So what kinds of music do you play?”

“I…” Kyoka tensed. She didn’t know why she got so insecure about her playing. “I didn’t tell you I played, I could just be listening.”

“S-sorry.” Kaminari spluttered. “I just kinda assumed…I mean, you seem like the type?”

“It’s ok.” Kyoka forced herself to push through the embarrassment. “Yeah, I play a couple different instruments. All kinds of music, really, but I like rock.”

“Me too!” Kaminari said excitedly. “I like a lot of different music, it’s just all so good! There’s like, rock, and hyperpop and everything! And they all have different things to offer!”

“Of course you would like hyperpop.” Kyoka rolled her eyes. “It fits you, high energy and all.”

“Hey!” Kaminari pouted indignantly. “I like other music too.”

Kyoka gave him a tiny smile, “I never said it was a bad thing.”

Kaminari blushed and spluttered for a moment, “So, uh, um, what’s the plan now?”

A voice spoke quietly behind them, “Now we kill some heroes.”

Kyoka jumped and spun around to see Shinso grinning at them in his civilian outfit. She put a hand on her chest and concentrated on getting her heartbeat back under control, “How long have you been there?”

Shinso shrugged, “Not too long. I tried to match my footsteps with yours so it’d be harder to pick them out. Sneaking up on someone with enhanced hearing is good stealth practice.”

“Well, you’re good at it.” Kaminari’s fingertips were sparking and his hair was standing a bit on end, but instead of making him look more threatening, it just made him look like a cute little puffball. “I didn’t even know you were there!”

Shinso smirked, “That’s the point. Now follow me. Izuku knows where a bunch of heroes are gonna be sitting ducks.”

Tamaki snacked on some rock candy as their class staked out the apartment where the drugs were being kept. They’d already evacuated the building of all civilians and, according to Mirio’s mysterious source, the villains were already on their way.

“What are you so worried about Tamaki?” Nejire poked his side, making him flinch slightly.

Tamaki sighed, “I don’t know how much I trust Mirio’s new friend. He’s sure giving us a lot of information for someone that afraid for his life.”

“What do you mean? That’s his job!” Nejire laughed. “And killing the snitch is one of the villains objectives anyway, and it’s not like it makes a difference to them how much info he gives us.”

“It *does* make me scared for him, though.” Mirio frowned. “The more information he gives us, the more likely it is that the other villains will track him down. I just wish he’d show his face so we could rescue him. We could put him under hero protection so he wouldn’t have to be so afraid all the time!”

“What if it’s a trick?” Tamaki said. “What if he’s really working for the villains and…”

“That’s just silly, Tamaki.” Nejire rolled her eyes. “His tip was good last time, wasn’t it? He said there was going to be a villain fight, so we showed up and *boom!* Villain fight.”

“He left out a lot of details though.” Tamaki muttered. “And a lot of the villains ended up getting away.”

“That was our fault not his.” Mirio’s eyes filled with determination. “But we won't let it happen again, alright? We’re heroes! We’ll catch these villains and then we’ll save the snitch!”

Izuku’s voice spoke through Hitoshi’s comms, “there’s a hero alone on the rooftop just left of the apartment building. It’ll give you a good vantage point of the druggie apartment.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Hitoshi responded. “Would you like me to bring

Sparky and Siren along too?"

Jiro cocked an eyebrow, "Siren?"

HItoshi smirked, "I heard you talking about your interests in music. A musical genius, plus pseudo mind control? Sounds like a Siren to me."

"I'm not a musical *genius."* Jiro muttered, blushing. "But thank you."

"I like it!" Kaminari said. "I'm just *Sparky*. Why don't I get a badass villain name?"

Jiro got a mischievous look in her eye, "Because you're not a badass."

Kaminari stuck his tongue out at her, but Jiro just smiled back. Her blush hadn't completely faded from earlier and Hitoshi chuckled under his breath as he watched them until Izuku's voice in his ear ruined the moment, "No, we're gonna split you guys up. There's another pair of heroes I want them to take care of."

"Got it." Hitoshi nodded and turned back to the other two. "How do you two feel about a solo mission?"

"Hmm." Nedzu smiled and sipped his tea. "It seems the boys have made an error."

The rest of the teachers turned to stare at him and Gran raised an eyebrow in question, "You don't sound too disappointed about that."

"Oh on the contrary." Nedzu grinned. "I'm rather excited to see how they fix it!"

Drugs

Chapter Summary

The drug raid goes south.

Chapter Notes

Memes!
X X X

Cami thought it was totally uncool that her classmates had left her up here on her own. She knew she was high energy or whatever and stealth was of utmost importance to this mission and so they didn't want her getting too loud or excited and ruining the whole thing, but part of her was starting to wonder if being around her was just too exhausting. The least the could have done was send her with at least one other person! Being alone like this was giving her the heebie jeebies!

She huffed and called on the comms, "Guys? Can you send someone up? It's super duper lonely up here!"

There was a painfully long minute before she heard footsteps behind her and smiled, turning around with a bounce, "Finally! I thought you were just gonna…" She tilted her head. "Who are you?"

"The last person you'll ever see." The person in front of her fired a gun she hadn't even noticed he was holding and she stumbled back as a paintball splattered across her chest. She gaped like a fish for a long moment, gingerly touching the paint with her fingertips, "You…You ruined my outfit!"

The kid, who apparently thought that all black with a pop of purple passed for fashion, gave her an incredulous look, " *That's* what you're upset about?!"

"Obviously!" Cami gestured to her front. "Do you know how long this is gonna take to clean?!" She huffed and held up a finger when it looked like the kid was about to say something. "I don't have time for this. Guys! This stupid kid ruined my outfit! Guys? Why aren't my comms working?"

The kid raised an eyebrow, "Because you're dead?"

Her comms sprang to life and she heard Cementoss's voice in her ear, "Yeah, kid. You're dead. Please drop your token and wait for one of Ectoplasm's clones to collect you."

"Wait…" Cami looked down at the paint again. "I'm dead?!"

"Yep." The kid shook his head and gently moved her out of the way so that he could stand where she'd been standing. "But don't worry. I'll try and make sure you're not lonely on the other side."

"I…" Cami spluttered as she watched the kid aim his gun at the apartment. "That's totally not comforting at all!"

The pair that Midoriya had sent them after was waiting impatiently for the villains to arrive, not realizing that at least four were already there. Denki walked as one of them, the one that Midoriya had said had some sort of earthquake quirk, paced back and forth, "How do we even know that this tip is legit?"

"I dunno." The other hero, the one with a quirk that made her collapsable, shrugged. "Mirio says the kid is the official snitch and everything, so we can probably trust him."

Denki frowned. Midoriya was the official snitch? How had he even gotten that job? Denki hadn't even known that was an option! Mom hadn't said anything about it! Jiro elbowed him in the ribs and gave him a questioning look along with a thumbs up. Denki took a deep breath and gave her a thumbs up back. Jiro grinned and silently started moving forward, her earphone jacks ready to stab. Denki gripped his new baseball bat tightly and followed after her.

Apparently, he wasn't as quiet as she was, though, because as soon as he started moving, the earthquake guy spun around and looked straight at him, "Whoa, looks like the info was correct after all!"

"I'll go after the guy!" Jiro yelled. "You get the girl."

"Right." Denki nodded. "Got it!"

He ran forward and swung the bat, but the girl simply collapsed into her waist and completely ducked under the bat. Denki got thrown on balance by the swing and, without the resistance of the bat actually *hitting* something, the momentum continued in a full circle until the girl he was fighting stuck out her foot and sent him sprawling to the floor.

“Hey!” Denki yelped as he lost his grip on the bat and it went skittering across the floor. “No fair!”

The girl paused, “I didn’t think villains were supposed to think about things like fairness.”

Denki glanced at her ankles and threw himself forward to grab one, “We’re not.”

He focused a jolt of electricity through his hand, just enough to make her freeze in her tracks. He bit his lip and tried to do what Izuku had taught him and make her take a step forward. Just a little electricity to stimulate the right muscles and…

She kicked him in the face.

Denki grabbed his face and his hand came away with blood. Definitely a busted nose, so *that* was great. He blinked away the pain and sniffed painfully. The telescope girl was back under her own control again, but that kick hadn’t been *her*. That had been Denki forcing her muscles to move, even if it wasn’t really the movement he’d been going for. So it was possible for him to puppeteer someone, he just needed more practice!

He heard a yell off to the side and looked to see Jiro looking shaken on the ground in front of the earthquake guy. She spat off to the side as she got to her feet, “Change of plans. You take the guy.”

“Yeah.” Denki nodded and scrambled to grab his bat again. “Yeah, that sounds better.”

He managed to grab the bat and get to his feet, but when he swung it, the earthquake guy just rolled his eyes and stopped the swing with his hand, “Is that really the best you got?”

A bone deep trembling started from where Denki was holding the bat and quickly spread to his entire body. He felt like his teeth were going to fall out at the same time that his muscles were going to liquify from the sheer force of the vibrations, but Denki grit his teeth and gripped the bat a little tighter. He was used to the sensation from his electricity anyway.

Midoriya had said that he could probably use less electricity and keep it focused on his body and conductors so Denki decided there was no better time to put that theory to the test. That way he wouldn’t be braindead by the end of the fight and could still help Jiro, assuming

she needed it. He covered his body with a layer of static, eyes widening when the lightning raced down the bat at the speed of, well, lightning. The guy he was fighting flinched, but didn't let go of the bat. It was a fight of endurance then. Denki upped the voltage.

Mirio took a deep breath and stepped into the wall when he heard the door start to open. He left just enough of his face out that he could see as two villains walked in and if he'd been able to breathe at the moment, he would have gasped when he recognized the two they'd seen the first day. The brothers grinned and high fived eachother as soon as they saw the drugs and Mirio stepped onto the other side of the wall.

He activated his comms, "Hey everybody move in, the villains are here!"

He hadn't even finished talking when he felt the floor start to vibrate underneath his feet. What was Shindo doing? He wasn't even supposed to be that close to the apartment! Him and Nakagame were lookouts! His hair stood on end and the vibrations in the floor got stronger. It was time to get the villains and get out of here. Mirio jumped through the wall and immediately fell into a fighting stance. The villains looked up in shock and one of them dropped the box of drugs he'd just picked up.

"Villains." Mirio smiled as the other heroes started pouring in. "You are under arrest!"

"Yeah…doesn't really sound like fun." One of the brothers looked at the other. "Leave the drugs?"

The other nodded, "Leave the drugs."

"No!" Mirio lunged forward. "Don't…"

The brothers transformed into grasshoppers and hopped through the window. Mirio was about to jump out after them when the entire building started shaking.

"Somebody go find Shindo." Mirio ordered. "Figure out what's going on."

The shaking was getting worse, but Denki didn't give up. He upped the voltage again and grinned when his opponent's hair started

standing on end. Denki ignored the shaking and focused a little more power on the bat.

The other guy let go first.

He stumbled backwards and Denki was left reeling as the shaking suddenly stopped. He swung the bat again, still sparking from the metal and hit the guy in the gut hard enough to make him lose his footing. Was he supposed to hit him again?

Just as he was preparing another swing, Jiro reached out and stabbed an earphone jack into the earthquake guy's arm, making him calm down within a few seconds, "Don't go overboard Sparky."

Denki gratefully deactivated his quirk and put the end of the bat on the floor so he could lean on it, "Aww, but aren't we supposed to be acting as the villains."

"We're supposed to be killing them, not causing them serious damage!" Jiro shoved a gun into his hand. "Now let's get this over with."

They looked at each other for a long moment and Denki gulped, "I can't believe we're actually doing this. But, uh, here goes nothing."

They turned back to back so that they were each facing their own opponent and Denki's hands only shook a little bit as he cocked the gun and pulled the trigger. Red paint splattered everywhere and both of the heroes numbly dropped their tokens.

"Well," Jiro smiled, out of breath, "that was fun."

Another hero rounded the corner at a run and Denki didn't have time to think, he just pulled the trigger. There was another splash of paint and then Jiro let out a low whistle, "Yeah, I'm not the only one picking up stuff from the Shadows."

Pepper Spray

Chapter Summary

Chemical warfare

Chapter Notes

Art!
Wormz X X

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X

“Siren, Sparky.” Midoriya’s voice echoed in their ears. “Good work, but there’s more heroes headed your way.”

Kyoka grimaced, “Of course there is. What do you suggest?”

“Well, I’d suggest you get out of there.” Midoriya sounded like he was smiling. “But there’s no reason you can’t cause some chaos before you go.”

Mirio’s phone rang loudly, distracting him from the current crisis. He dug it out of his pocket and almost dropped it when he saw the snitch’s number come up on the screen, “Hello? Please tell me you know where the villains went.”

“They’re about a block north of you, heading down the main street.” The snitch said. “I’d send your friend Suneater after them. If he manifests wings he should catch up to them quickly. Also, he ate rock candy earlier. right? If he can get close to the villains, he can use the crystals to take away any safe landing spots as they jump.”

Mirio nodded, “Tamaki! The villains are only about a block north of here. The snitch suggests using your crystals to prevent them from landing.”

“O-ok. As long as I don’t have to talk to them.” Tamaki shivered, but sprouted wings and followed the villains out the window. It wouldn’t take him long to catch up to them.

“That’s not the reason I called.” The snitch’s voice took on a desperate quality. “I just found out that the drug dealers boobytrapped the

apartment!”

Mirio froze, “What kinds of boobytraps?”

“Some kind of gas, at the very least.” the snitch sniffed. “I’m so sorry! If I’d known I never would have…”

“It’s alright.” Mirio tried to make his voice sound reassuring. “Nobody move! The place is boobytrapped!”

His classmates eyes widened, but they’d barely had time to process his warning before there was a quiet *boom* and the room started filling with gas. His classmates started running and Mirio went intangible. It looked like the warning came just in the nick of time.

Hitoshi ignored the dead hero’s protests as he waited, gun in hand, for the right moment. He didn’t want to open fire until the heroes had at least gotten a chance to arrest the other villains, otherwise there was no way they’d be able to frame them for the attack. Of course, they could always blame the whole thing on Jiro and Kaminari, but that was just the backup plan, not the ideal. The ideal was to keep Shadows of the heroes’ radar as much as possible, at least until tomorrow.

Hitoshi was excited for tomorrow.

There had been a little earthquake earlier, probably due to Shindo’s quirk, but even though Shinso had a clear view of the apartment, Izuku had told him to hold off for now. As per usual, he’d come up with another one of his crazy plans, so Hitoshi’s job was to use the chaos to pick off as many heroes as possible and Hitoshi planned on doing it well.

There was a muffled explosion and the apartment he was watching started filling with some sort of gas. He was just wondering if that was the signal when Izuku gave him the go ahead, “Ok, Hitoshi. Fire at will.”

Hitoshi picked a paint gun from his duffel bag and aimed it at the window. The gas, probably pepper spray, would make it more difficult to see his targets, but it would also make it more difficult for his targets to see *him.* Or his paintballs. Aiming wasn’t really important when a wide spray of bullets would get the job done.

Time to paint that apartment red.

Izuku sat back to watch the chaos through the cameras. It had taken some stealth to get two of Jiro's pepper spray canisters inside the apartment, but once that was done, Jiro had plugged an earphone jack into each one and a powerful heartbeat rhythm had been enough to pop the canister from the inside out. Izuku honestly hadn't been sure it would work, but Jiro apparently had a very powerful heartbeat. Her quirk was just so interesting, especially since it still seemed to be developing!

He still had so many questions though! Why had her quirk just barely evolved to include heartbeat control? And even the strength to pop those pepper spray cans…her quirk was extremely powerful, but she didn't seem to realize it. The issue was that she seemed fairly confident in other areas of her life. She dressed how she wanted, she would tease Hitoshi to no end, she didn't even seem *that* shy when they'd confronted her about playing music! She had some insecurities, sure, but overall she was a confident person, so it just seemed out of character for her not to own up to the strength of her quirk.

Unless it had only gotten more powerful recently.

Izuku shook the thought from his head as Hitoshi started painting the apartment red. People's quirks didn't just get suddenly more powerful out of nowhere, it was much more likely that she'd just been training more and that was what had led to the evolution. Or it was quirk enhancing drugs, but that probably would have shown up in the background check they'd done for the exercise. Either way, Izuku could worry about that later. The apartment had been full of heroes after ambushing the Hotta brothers, so even though they'd started running out after the pepper spray bombs, Hitoshi's blanket of bullets had hit quite a few. Not all of the injuries would be fatal, of course, but this move would still take quite a few heroes out of commission. He should have stationed Hitoshi with a view of the front door to pick the heroes off as they ran away! Oh well, the point of this exercise was to live and learn.

Izuku saw three of the heroes drop their tokens and called over to Hitoshi, "Fall back. Meet us back at base. We need to regroup."

Izuku saw Hitoshi nod and start to put away his gun, "Sparky and Siren?"

"Already on their way back to base." Izuku said. "Both of them are alive, if you were worried."

“I wasn’t.” The camera quality wasn’t good enough to see if he was blushing or not. “I mean, they’re fun, but they won’t be around for much longer.”

“All the more reason to enjoy them while they’re here.” Izuku teased. “See you soon.”

When the door to the dead room opened, Electra had been expecting one person to walk through, maybe two. Not *seven.* They were all covered in red paint and three of them had their eyes swollen shut on top of that. Recovery Girl followed behind them, leaning on her cane as she pointed toward the bathrooms, “You three go continue washing out your eyes, pepper spray is nasty stuff and I can heal the swelling, but it won’t do any good until the irritants are all gone. Well, what are you waiting for? Get going!”

The three teens with swollen eyes stumbled toward the bathrooms and the other four shuffled awkwardly as they watched their classmates go. Recovery Girl glared at them, “As for the rest of you, I’ll heal those welts you got from the paintballs, but you need to focus on watching the exercise and figuring out where you went wrong.”

“I know where we went wrong.” A boy muttered. “We were ambushed by villains.”

The Recovery Girl bopped him on the head with her cane, “Be that as it may, you are still here to learn. Now come here and get your kisses.”

The students lined up dejectedly and Electra couldn’t help a little chuckle as she watched them all lean away from Recovery Girl’s healing kisses. As soon as they were all healed, Recovery Girl shooed them away to the couch.

Tameda, as usual, looked at the newcomers with interest and got a mischievous glint in his eyes and he stood up on one of the couches, “Alright ghosts! Place your bets! Who's responsible for this massacre?”

“What’s the point?” Hanzou groaned. “It was obviously Shadows.”

“Wait?” One of the heroes frowned. “Who’s Shadows.”

They looked at him incredulously and Tameda barked out a laugh, “I guess that means they’re doing a good job.”

“I dunno if it was them.” The guard who said he’d been shot by the Green Shadow said. “It might have been their new friends. Didn’t the girl pick up pepper spray at the pawn shop?”

“She *did.”* Electra nodded. “But I don’t think my kid could have killed seven heroes on his own, so my money is on a team effort.”

“You’re betting on how we died?! That’s totally uncool!”

“Aww, it’s just a little fun.” Tameda grinned. “Any other bets?”

“Can we just watch the video?” One of the heroes complained. “It’s embarrassing enough without you guys all taking bets.”

“Fine.” Tameda huffed good naturedly and jumped down onto the couch. “But just so you know, I bet it was the Shadows.”

Electra couldn’t help but be a little critical as the hero students walked right into a trap while thinking they were setting a trap for someone else. She was sure their teachers would have a lot to say about them trusting the snitch so blindly, especially considering that the Green Shadow *wasn’t* the official snitch. Her main attention wasn’t on the heroes, though, it was on Denki. He wasn’t here, which meant that he’d survived somehow, but it was apparently a close call considering how much of a fight the heroes put up. Electra watched with bated breath as she watched her kid fight for his life and then, finally, come out on top.

And then Denki pulled out his gun.

Tameda let out a low whistle, “I guess you were right about it being a team effort.”

Electra knew she was catching flies, but she just couldn’t stop gaping as she watched her son. He’d just *shot* someone. Two someones! She started grinning. She knew she should be mad at the Shadows for killing her and basically kidnapping her son, but Denki was doing so well! She was a proud mama, who could blame her? Ok, maybe most parents wouldn’t be proud of their son for shooting someone, especially not parents who were also heroes, but the point of the exercise was to act like villains, so *really* she was just encouraging her son in his goals, right? Besides, even if he was using these skills to be a villain right now, they were still combat skills and therefore applicable to hero work.

Speaking of applicable skills, maybe she should talk to Snipe about

getting Denki some shooting lessons after this, because he was a pretty good shot…her thoughts were interrupted when Recovery Girl eased herself down on the couch next to her, “Hello Electra. Long time no see. Your boy is doing well.”

Electra chuckled, “Better than I did, that’s for sure.”

“He’s got a lot of bad influences.” Recovery Girl laughed. “I’ll be honest, we expected the Shadows to get arrested the first day. I’m glad they didn’t though. The kids are learning a hard lesson, but it’ll be good for them.”

“If it doesn’t scar them forever.” Electra winced. “The Shadows…those kinds of villains are hard to fight. I wouldn’t want to come against them in real life.”

Recovery Girl nodded, “Neither would I. Don't worry though, Nedzu has plans to steer them onto the right path.”

Mistake

Chapter Summary

Even Izuku isn't perfect...

Chapter Notes

Art!
AruWithASketchbook

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

The hero students had retreated back to their agency as they spent the requisite time caring for the injured. Mirio was trying to stay upbeat like All Might, but it was hard when he'd just learned firsthand why Aizawa had expelled half their class. They had started off with forty students at the beginning of the week and now, in one single afternoon, they had lost almost a quarter of them. To make it even worse, no one knew exactly what had happened. They knew the apartment had been boobytrapped with pepper spray and guns, but some of the classmates they'd lost hadn't even been in the apartment when the boobytrapps went off and they'd still died.

"Mirio!" Nejire tried to sound upbeat, but he could tell she wasn't her usual, happy go lucky self either. "Tamaki's back! He caught the villains!"

Mirio looked up and saw a tired looking Tamaki with a plastic water bottle held carefully in both hands. At Mirio's curious look he grimaced and held it up to reveal two grasshoppers trapped inside. "I didn't know where else to put them. Sorry."

"We have holding cells that are glass instead of bars downstairs." Ogawa said. "The teachers must have anticipated that we'd face all kinds of quirks. Good work, man. At least we have *something* to show for that complete disaster."

"Disaster?" Tamaki's eyes widened in panic. "What happened after I left?"

There was a moment of heavy silence before Kohaku answered, "A massacre."

Mirio wanted to deny it, but that really was the only way to describe it, “The snitch called to tell us that the place was boobytrapped, but he was too late and we accidentally set off the traps. Seven people died and a lot more got shot. It…it was bad.”

“I’m really starting to wonder if your snitch is really on our side, man.” Ogawa complained. “What if he only told us about the drugs so that he could ambush us?”

“Oh don’t be ridiculous!” Nejire glared at him. “He was the one to tell us about the booby traps in the first place!”

“Too little, too late.” Kohaku pointed out. “If he was really on our side, he would have warned us earlier.”

“Maybe he didn’t know!” Mirio argued. “And we *did* catch the villains.”

“After losing seven heroes!” Ogawa argued. “That’s not worth it!”

“It wasn’t his fault!” Nejire raised her voice. “He didn’t know about the booby traps yet!”

“Maybe we should ask what Nedzu thinks?” Tamaki said quietly.

“Oh, right!” Mirio’s eyes widened in excitement. “He emailed us the first day, remember?”

“He probably wouldn’t mind us asking for advice.” Shin said. “It *is* the teachers job to be there in case we need them, after all.”

Mirio nodded excitedly and hurried to the computer, “What do you think we should…oh, he already sent us something.”

“Really?” Ogawa leaned over his shoulder to see better. “Huh. I guess he could tell that we needed it.”

Dear students,

One of the main obstacles that heroes face is their own hubris. Remember that, even if you know some of the facts, you very likely do not know all of them. This is why it is important to use all the resources at your disposal to learn all that you can about the villains. You already have a large advantage, students rarely begin utilizing the snitch so early in the game, but keep in mind that information in real life is often incomplete and that it

is your responsibility as heroes to test that information and add to it!

Keep up the good work!

Nedzu

Principal of UA High School

“I guess we *did* kinda go in assuming we knew everything.” Ogawa winced. “We didn’t really search the place as much as we maybe should have. We went in assuming that we had the advantage and we paid the price for it.”

“So we agree we can trust the snitch?” Mirio asked. “This email is basically confirmation that he’s on our side.”

“It also says that we should *test* that information.” Kohaku frowned. “I think we should give the snitch one more chance, but if it ends up like last time, we will never listen to him again. Also, we should meet him in person. Agreed?”

Ogawa nodded, “Agreed.”

“I guess that’s reasonable.” Mirio nodded.

Tamaki groaned. “That involves talking to him again, doesn’t it?”

“Yep.” Mirio smiled and pulled out his phone. “And there’s no time like the present.”

“Be on alert for alarms.” Izuku said cryptically. “There will be two villains. According to my info, they also obtained the bank objective, but that’s all I can give you. Sorry.” he hung up the phone, “As long as we don't kill any heroes on the museum heist and I show up for a meeting, that *should* keep them from getting too suspicious of me. But now we have a problem.”

“What problem?” Hitoshi frowned and looked at Izuku’s spiderweb of plans on the wall. “I thought we had the heroes right where we wanted them.”

“We do, but we also have a problem.” Izuku grabbed a marker, “We made a mistake.”

Mic let out a shocked laugh, “They’re gaslighting the students!”

“Yep.” Midnight looked just as surprised. “And it’s working.”

Shouta looked at Nedzu suspiciously, “You know what their mistake is.”

“Yes.” Nedzu put down his teacup. “It seems as though Midoriya has realized it too, although it is going to be a bit of a mess to fix. Oh, this is exciting.”

“You still haven’t told us what it is.” Cementoss said tiredly.

“Oh, haven't I?” Nedzu took a sip of tea. “Odd.”

Hitoshi kept his voice down, even though he knew it wouldn’t make a difference with Jiro in the other room, “What mistake?

Izuku groaned, “We let someone else kill the snitch.”

“Yeah…” Hitoshi shrugged in confusion. “Not really seeing how that’s a problem.”

“The problem is that now *they* have the objective tag, not us.” Izuku frowned. “The heroes want to meet with me tomorrow morning, and if I’m not wearing that tag, they’ll know I’m not the real snitch.”

“Oh.” Hitoshi winced. “Yeah. I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Neither had I. I mean, I had planned pretending to be the snitch as a backup plan, that’s why we had the real snitch taken out so early, but I hadn’t even thought of what would happen if the heroes wanted to meet in person.” Izuku sighed. “Going after that tag will put us behind for tomorrow.”

“What if we split up?” Hitoshi suggested. “You go after the tag and I can take Jiro and Kaminari and make sure all our ducks are in a row for the charity event.”

“I…I think that might work.” Izuku used his teeth to take the top off the marker in his hand and turned to his mad scientist wall. “Alright, let’s make a few adjustments…”

Denki stumbled under the weight of the box he was carrying. It was really heavy and they had an entire truck full of them, “What even are

these things?"

"You don't need to know." Shinso replied. "You're just here to set them up."

They were walking toward a large building, but they weren't the only ones. The entire place was a flurry of activity and dozens of civilians were heading in and out carrying supplies, decorations, and all sorts of other things. It honestly looked like someone was having a party. Denki and Jiro followed a few steps behind Shinso as someone ran to hold the door open for the three of them. It looked like, with all the chaos, everyone just assumed that they were supposed to be there.

Shinso led them through the main room, weaving around half-set-up tables and chairs until someone called out to them, "Hey! You three! Stop right there!"

Denki thought they were going to make a run for it, but instead, Shinso obediently stopped in his tracks and turned to face the woman who had called out to them, "Are you the one in charge?"

"Yes, that would be me." The woman looked stressed and held a clipboard in one hand. "Don't know why Nedzu thought it would be a good idea to do this. It adds a whole lot more work for us. Are you here to help us set up?"

Hitoshi nodded and hefted the box in his hands, "We were just about to take these party favors to the back. Where is the best place to put them?"

"Um…I'll have someone show you. I didn't know we were doing party favors." Teh woman shook her head and started muttering. "That rat, always going over my head and sending things I didn't even know…." She jumped a little as she realized they were just standing there and hurried to look at her clipboard. "What were your names?"

"Hitoshi Shinso." Hitoshi answered confidently. "We might not be on the list, we kinda signed up at the last minute."

"Hmmm, right, I'm not seeing your name here." The woman frowned. "Can I see your tokens? I just need to make sure you're not villains or anything."

Beside him, Jiro froze and Denki was sure that *now* they would drop the boxes and make a run for it, but instead, Shinso awkwardly shifted the box so that he had a free hand and fished something from his

pocket, “Here you go.”

Denki’s jaw dropped when he saw a *civilian* token in Shinso’s hand. How…why hadn’t *he* been given one of those?! All he had was a villain token! He glanced over at Jiro, but she looked just as confused and shocked as he was.

Shinso put the token back into his pocket, “Anything else?”

“Well, I will need to see everyone’s…”

Her face went slack as Shinso took control, “You already saw all our tokens. Don’t remember me brainwashing you.”

The woman blinked as she got into her right mind again, “Um, sorry, I think I spaced out for a second. I saw all your tokens, right?”

“Yep!” Denki gave her a charming smile. “Now, uh, I think you were about to show us where to put these? They’re kinda heavy.”

“Oh, right.” She pointed toward a door near where they were setting up the stage, “There’s a back room right behind that door. Feel free to put them there for now, we’ll deal with them later.”

“Thank you!”

As soon as they were in the back room, Denki practically dropped the box on the floor, “Oh, thank goodness.”

“Don’t drop the boxes.” Shinso glared at him. “They’re…fragile.”

“Fragile?” Jiro looked at him suspiciously. “What even are they?”

Hitoshi hummed thoughtfully as he set down his box and opened it up, “Something that’s going to make an impression.”

He pulled something out of his box that looked around the size of a small plate, but thicker and rounded like a dome. Hitoshi grinned, “You two go get the rest of the boxes, and get the other volunteers to help you. I’m gonna set these up, probably under each of the tables and we’ll need some up by the stage and…” He laughed. “I think I might be picking up a muttering habit from Izuku.”

“Yeah, you might be.” Jiro nodded. “How did you get a civilian token?”

Shinso grinned wickedly, “From a civilian. Now let’s get to work.”

Chaos

Chapter Summary

Everyone has an objective

Chapter Notes

Art!
Wormz

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X

Izuku made his way to the warehouse as quickly as he could. The villains that they'd had kill the snitch, Akiko and Maki, hadn't been found out yet, so they should still be using this place as their hideout like they had been the first day when Hitoshi had talked to them. All Izuku had to do was shoot them both before they saw him so he could walk right in and steal the snitch token. Simple.

He kept his footsteps silent and flattened himself against the wall, keeping to the shadows as he entered, only to find the warehouse deserted. Izuku frowned in frustration and cautiously made his way further into the room. There was a chance someone was still here, but it didn't seem like that was very likely, based on the state of the warehouse. Oh well, he'd just steal the objective while the villains were gone! That was even easier than killing them for it.

There were piles of stuff strewn around the warehouse and Izuku searched every single one, looking for the snitch objective tag, only to come up empty handed. He searched a little more frantically, throwing things around the room to make sure he hadn't missed anything, but sure enough, there was nothing to find.

The objective tag wasn't here.

Which, of course, meant that the villains were keeping it on them. Izuku cursed and ran out of the warehouse. They must be out looking for one of the other objectives! He couldn't afford to just wait for them to get back, just in case they weren't planning on returning to base until after his meeting with the heroes, which meant that he had to go to them, which meant that he had to find them, which meant that he needed his laptop, which was back at *his* base. Izuku ran a little faster.

Hopefully, Hitoshi was doing a little better with his mission.

So far, no one had noticed that Hitoshi's group were *not* part of the normal volunteers. In fact, they had even managed to enlist some of the civilians to help them carry the boxes inside, which Hitoshi thought was darkly hilarious. It was a little to risky to have random people actually *place* the bombs, but he, Kaminari, and Jiro had that covered.

"Ok, so I've already placed one underneath all the tables…" Hitoshi looked around at all the bombs they had left. "Let's focus on the pillars and load bearing walls. We can use the decorations to hide them, so we won't have to worry too much about the civilians finding them. We should probably put a few on the other floors too, just to be sure."

"Alright." Kaminari nodded and grabbed a box of the bombs. "And you're still not going to tell us what these are?"

"Don't even ask." Jiro rolled her eyes. "He's just going to be needlessly vague and ominous again."

Hitoshi just grinned.

"You act like you don't' find that hilarious." Kaminari laughed. "Come on, I know you secretly like it!"

Jiro blushed, "I do not!"

"It's ok." Hitoshi smirked and leaned down into her personal space. "They say it's normal to like the bad boy."

Jiro gave him a look and jabbed her earphone jacks at him, "Don't forget that I can brainwash you too."

Hitoshi laughed, "Only temporarily."

"Long enough to get you to go away." Jiro muttered.

"Hey! We should all meet up after this is over." Kaminari said. "Like, we've gotten to know each other pretty well by now, right? We're friends!"

Hitoshi raised an eyebrow, "Friends?"

"Yep!" Kaminari grinned. "Friends!"

“Fine by me.” Jiro said.

Hitoshi shrugged, “If you still want to after, then sure, let’s meet up sometime.”

Kaminari did a little fist bump, “Yes!”

“Everything is going to go terribly wrong.” Tamaki muttered.

“Oh, don’t be so depressing!” Nejire said. “It’s gonna be fine!”

They had already cased the museum and made sure that there weren’t any secret booby traps or anything, and the staff already knew they’d be arriving to catch the villains later, so now all that was left was to wait until the alarms went off.

The snitch hadn’t been able to give them an exact time, but everyone was waiting in anticipation anyway. The museum had closed about an hour ago, so reasonably, the villains could be making their move at any moment. It helped that they knew who the villains were, too. They’d been able to look back at the bank objective and make sure they knew how to fight everyone that had been involved.

Suddenly, a shrill alarm echoed through the agency and everyone looked toward the command center. Kohaku looked at the main computer and grinned, “It’s go time.”

The Hotta brothers stayed in their grasshopper forms even after they escaped the glass cell those hero students had put them in. The cell *was* better than a traditional barred cell, of course, but it wasn’t airtight or made to keep the bugs out…or, well, *in,* so it had only taken the two of them an hour or so to find a way out.

The hero agency was a tornado of activity. The hero students were mobilizing for something big and the Hotta bros simply latched onto the hem of one of the student’s capes and let themselves be carried out of the hero agency with no one the wiser. The student they were attached to ran down the street, alongside a crowd of other hero students, and the two brothers hung onto the cape for dear life. If they dropped off now, there was a chance they’d be trampled and that did *not* sound like fun. It was a few minutes before the heroes started slowing to a stop. Immediately, the two of them jumped off the hero’s cape and darted into the first building they saw, which ended up being some kind of museum.

To their surprise, there were already a couple villains inside.

“Come on, let’s do this quickly.” The woman looked around nervously. “There’s no telling when the heroes will arrive.”

“Nah, they don’t have any idea we’re here.” The man rolled his eyes. “That flashdrive Shadows gave us worked like a charm in silencing the alarms.”

The Hotta brothers looked at each other. The alarms *had* gone off, they’d just gone off in teh hero agency. And hadn’t Shadows been the one who had told them about the drugs? That had ended up being an ambush, and now the heroes were here…

Shadows was apparently more dangerous than they’d thought.

Izuku’s laptop case bounced against his side as he ran toward the weapons objective, which was apparently where Akiko and Maki were. He hadn’t been planning on them going after an objective tonight, especially not one so dangerous, but apparently nothing was going according to plan. The weapons were being stored in a shipping container on the docks and Izuku rounded the corner to see Akiko drilling through the metal with zero issues.

He skidded to a stop and hid behind the corner of another shipping container as he grabbed his gun. Ok, it was still basically the original plan. Shoot them. Get the tag. Get out. Simple. His hands were shaking slightly, still high on adrenaline from running here, but he took a deep breath and tried to steady them before shooting. The bang echoed through the docks and he saw a splatter of red paint…on the side of the shipping container, not on the villain he’d been aiming for.

Of all the times to miss…

“There’s someone here!” Maki growled. “You focus on getting the weapons, I’ll take care of them.”

Izuku swore and started running. At least if they were separated they might be easier to pick off? He weaved through the maze of shipping containers and felt bullets whiz past him from Maki’s quirk. Izuku yelped and ran a little faster, skidding around the corner and letting out a deranged giggle when he saw a ladder just a few meters ahead. If he could just get the high ground, then he might actually stand a chance of shooting Maki before he got shot himself.

He scrambled up the ladder and reached for his gun again. He couldn't afford to miss again. Maki was running quickly toward him and Izuku was about to pull the trigger when a truck pulled in between them, blocking his shot. The bed was full of guns and other weapons, a tag with the number 10 on it.

"We've got the objective!" Akiko yelled. "Get in and let's get out of here!"

Maki nodded and jumped into the truck. Izuku swore as the truck swerved away. There went two objectives. He jumped down off the shipping container, landing in a neat roll that made the landing hurt significantly less, but he still grimaced as he ran to find a car of his own.

Too bad having a car chase wasn't an objective.

Mirio stood proudly above the two unconscious villains. They had been after the crown objective, which was apparently being kept in the museum, but thanks to the snitch's info, catching them had been a cinch!

"And nobody got hurt." Mirio said proudly. "I guess this means we can trust the snitch."

Chase

Chapter Summary

Things just keep going off the rails, don't they?

Chapter Notes

Art!
Wormz X

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

Izuku knew he didn't have long. If he didn't find a car to hotwire within the next minute, the villains he was chasing would be long gone and he'd lose his chance to get the snitch tag. Izuku ran at full speed, skidding around the corner where, thankfully, he found a car. It wasn't anything special, just a standard red sedan, but right now it was exactly what he needed. Now to hotwire the thing. He'd done it once before by this point, so he was able to do it slightly faster than when he'd picked up the bombs, since he halfway knew what he was doing now, but he was still panicking that he wouldn't be fast enough.

"Come on." Izuku muttered. "Just work."

He cheered when the car sprang to life. He couldn't afford to waste too much time celebrating though, he could already hear the truck getting away. He jumped into the driver's seat and barely remembered to put on his seatbelt before pulling out. Recovery Girl may be on call for the exercise, but he didn't want to *have* to use her. This might be an exercise, but the cars were still real, which was a problem considering that he'd never actually learned how to drive. He was way too young to be driving, legally, but he was a quick learner! All the controls were pretty straightforward and he'd watched a few videos on it before the exercise, so it hadn't taken him long to figure it out when he'd stolen the bombs on the first day. Back then, however, he'd had *time.* He didn't have to worry about keeping up with anyone and he'd been able to drive as slowly and carefully as he wanted.

Izuku no longer had that privilege.

As soon as he turned the corner onto the main road, he saw the

villains' truck in the distance. Izuku pushed the gas pedal down as far as it could go. He gripped the steering wheel tightly as the car quickly sped up to uncomfortable speeds, but he was catching up!

He could tell the exact moment that the villains he was chasing noticed him because they immediately sped up and swerved onto a side street in an attempt to shake them off. Izuku's face hardened with determination and he turned the corner after them as fast as he dared. He barely managed to keep the truck in sight as they led him farther and farther into the fake city. The issue was that this wasn't some video game. There were still people wandering the streets and, unlike the fake weapons they'd been provided, a car could do some real damage. So Izuku had to watch out for the villains he was following, he had to watch out for civilians as well, all while driving at top speeds when he really didn't know how to drive. It was all he could do to stay in the lines and not lose sight of his target, but those two villains were adults, which meant that they had years more driving experience than he did. It seemed like, no matter what he did, they managed to keep just barely in the lead.

All of a sudden, a little old lady started crossing the street in front of them. Since she wasn't very far into the street yet, the villains managed to swerve around her, but Izuku…well, he didn't quite trust himself enough for that. Maybe if he'd been a real villain, he wouldn't have cared about hitting her, but he *wasn't* a real villain. He was here to be a hero.

Izuku's body slammed forward when he slammed on the brakes. The old lady gave him a polite little wave as she took her sweet time crossing the street and he awkwardly waved back, his whole body jittery as he tried to keep one eye on the truck, which disappeared around a corner almost as soon as he stopped. After what seemed like an eternity, the little old lady *finally* got clear of his car and Izuku stepped on the gas. He'd seen where the truck had turned, so if he could just catch up before they made another turn…

He drove around the corner and punched the steering wheel when he realized the truck was already gone. He let the car slow to a stop and sat there for a minute, frustrated tears leaking out of his eyes before he managed to get himself under control again. Izuku drew in a shaky breath and reached for his laptop.

"Ok, time for plan C."

Yuyu Haya smiled at the civilians on the street as she went through the motions of patrolling. It would have been more fun to go on the museum raid with Nejire chan, but after what had happened with the drugs, they'd decided it was best to not have all the heroes in one place. She could see the logic in it, of course, but she couldn't help feeling just a little left out. She saw some of the civilians staring at her and gave them a little wave. When was something fun going to happen?

She must have jinxed it, because right as she finished the thought, a civilian ran around the corner. His eyes widened in relief as soon as he saw her and he made a beeline toward her, "Hero! Help! Please!"

"Yes, of course! That's what I'm here for." Yuyu chucked awkwardly. "What can I help you with?"

"There are two cars in a high speed chase." The civilian pointed to the next street. "They're putting everyone in danger!"

"right!I'm on it. You can count on me!" She gave the civilian a thumbs up before dashing off. She activated her comms as she ran, "Guys, any ideas on how to stop a car chase?"

Izuku watched through the cameras as the truck he'd been following started driving less erratically now that they had officially lost their tail. They still seemed to be taking the long way home, just in case, but even with all the intentionally wrong turns, Izuku could still tell that they were headed in the general direction of the warehouse he'd visited earlier.

They must not have realized he already knew where their base was.

Izuku quickly plotted out the fastest way there. As long as he drove reasonably fast and the villains kept wasting time trying to throw him off, he *should* be able to beat them there. He mentally circled the small street leading to the warehouse before he started driving again. They would have to pass through that street to get to their base, so, well, it just seemed like the perfect place for an ambush.

"Well, at least the students seem to be learning!" Mic said cheerily. "They left some kids patrolling so that they'd be safe if the museum raid went south."

"Yes." Cementoss nodded. "And Haya called the other heroes, so they

won't have another missing hero case like they did with Hanzou."

"They're still falling for Shadows' logical ruses." Aizawa pointed out. "At least for now."

"That's gonna change right quick, though." Snipe said. "It's looking like that young'un aint gonna get the tag he needs to fool 'em."

"I dunno." Midnight purred. "So far, he seems quite resourceful."

"And responsible, even if he *is* driving without a license." Mic said. "He didn't hit that old lady. Though, um, what would have happened if he didn't stop?"

"That particular member of the Help Us Company has an interesting quirk that makes her uniquely suited for this type of work." Nedzu explained. "She can survive a life threatening injury once per day, though it only affects her and cannot transfer to anyone else and it still takes time and stamina for her to recover completely."

"That explains why she crossed the road." Aizawa groaned. "It's likely she assumed that the car doing the chasing was some of our hero students and decided to test them."

"My thoughts exactly." Nedzu smiled. "And young Midoriya passed that test with flying colors."

When Izuku got to the street he'd picked out on the cameras, he parked his stolen car blocking as much of the road as he could. "Ok, so they're going to pass through here, And the car should force them to stop, or at least slow them down. Hopefully, that'll be enough to get them out of the car. I don't think the paintballs are strong enough to go through a closed window, so I'm going to need some way to break them…"

He looked around the street, but didn't find any rocks that he could use. There wouldn't be anything useful in the car, considering that these were basically just prop cars, that's why all the apartments were unfurnished, but he was running out of options, so Izuku decided to check anyway. He almost sobbed in relief when he opened the trunk and found a tire iron sitting right beside the spare tire under the floor. He wasn't sure if all the cars had them, or if he'd just gotten lucky, but he didn't have any time to waste figuring that out. He tossed the tire iron between his hands a few times to get used to the weight before shoving it into a loop on one of his belts. That would have to do.

He couldn't wait in the car, obviously, considering that there was a big chance that the truck was going to ram straight into the car without stopping, so he kneeled down on the side of the street and tried his best to blend into the growing shadows. He was half-convinced that his plan was going to fail this time too, but even a small chance of success was better than not trying at all.

The dead room was in chaos.

Pretty much everyone there had been killed by the Shadows, so seeing their plans go off the rails for the first time was satisfying in a petty sort of way, even for the villains and civilians who had started cheering on the Shadows for the fun of it. Electra was part of that group, but mostly because Denki was still teaming up with them. Oddly enough, the real snitch, who'd been dead since the first day, was one of the ones cheering for Midoriya's plan to work.

The dead hero students were rooting for Midoriya to fail, obviously. If the Green Shadow got his hands on the snitch tag, that would be the final nail in the coffin for the hero students. It had to be hard watching their classmates fall for all the lies, but as long as Midoriya didn't have the snitch tag, there was still a chance that the students would realize that they were being duped.

Right now, the game could go either way.

"So…" Tameda leaned over the couch. "Are you rooting for the Shadows or the heroes?"

Electra gave a mischievous smile, "Well, my kid is currently helping out the Shadows, so…"

"Right, he was one of the ones handling those mystery boxes." Tameda grinned. "Hey! Does anyone want to bet on what's in those boxes?"

"Ooh!" Camie looked excited. "Didn't they say those were party favors?"

"Like that's not an obvious lie." Shindo rolled his eyes. "And whose side are you on anyway? You're supposed to be cheering for our classmates!"

Camie stuck her tongue out at him, "It's just for fun! Don't be, like, boring or whatever."

“What about you?” Tamaeda called out to a burly looking guy who had been sitting in the corner quietly. “Have you got any ideas?”

“I’m not gonna bet this time. It wouldn’t be fair.” The guy grinned. “I already know what’s in the boxes.”

“What?!” the room exploded into even more chaos. “How?!”

The man just kept smiling, “I was the one guarding them. That green one killed me on the very first day.”

“Well?” Tameda rubbed his hands together. “Aren’t you gonna give us any hints?”

“Nope.” The guard shook his head. “It’ll be more fun if I don’t tell ya.”

“Why aren’t you taking bets about whether or not Shadows will get the snitch tag?” Shindo huffed.

Tameda’s face lit up, “Good idea, we totally should! Alright everybody! Place your bets!”

“I hope he fails and shows up to the meeting empty handed.” Hanzou called out.

“Well of course you would say that, you want the heroes to win.” Electra rolled her eyes. “I think he’s gonna get the tag, and kill those two villains to boot.”

“Well, there’s only one way to find out.” Tameda glanced at the screen. “It looks like the truck’s headed his way.”

Weapons

Chapter Summary

Izuku sets an ambush

Chapter Notes

Art!
Josie X X X
dolls

Memes!
X X X X X

Izuku checked his weapons one last time as he heard the sound of an engine coming down the street. It was only a few seconds before the truck rounded the corner and Izuku tensed as he prepared to spring into action. The truck slowed to a stop almost immediately when the villains inside saw Izuku's stolen car blocking their path. They seemed to debate for a moment, truck stalled in the middle of the road , before they started moving backwards. Izuku said a string of words that would have made Kacchan proud and leapt from his hiding place, only for the truck to rev its engines and start moving forward again. Izuku had to jump out of the way to avoid being run down as the truck gunned it and rammed full speed into the makeshift barricade. There was a loud sound of crunching metal as the truck pushed the car down the street as far as it could before finally coming to a stop.

Izuku wasn't going to get any better chances than this. He ran forward, tire iron raised, and let out a strangled warcry when he shattered the passenger side window. Glass flew everywhere and Izuku screwed his eyes closed, raising his hands to protect his face. He felt the car door slam into him forcefully and stumbled back, reaching for his gun.

The girl villain, Akiko, was glaring at him as she stepped out of the truck, "You just don't give up, do you?"

"Nope." Izuku grit his teeth and fired a shot straight at her, only for Akiko to dive out of the way just in time. The paintball still hit her in the side, splattering as it made contact, but it obviously wasn't enough for the teachers to call a fatality because she didn't drop her token. Izuku's mind raced and he took a step back, only to bump into the

other villain, Maki, who had come up behind him while he wasn't paying attention. The man was massive, how had he snuck up on him?!

“You’re just a puny little kid.” Maki snarled. “What makes you think you’ll survive a fight against us?”

Izuku shrugged, “There’s no law that says I can’t try.”

Yuyu was really confused. She’d thought that *stopping* the car chase would be the difficult part, but she couldn’t even find it! She’d still done her due diligence of course. She’d asked around to see if anyone else had seen the car chase, then ran in the same direction that witnesses reported that the cars had been going, but she still hadn’t had any luck finding either of them. Either one car had caught up to the other or they both had simultaneously decided that they were tired of chasing other around the city because, so far as Yuyu could see, there were no disturbances anywhere.

That was, until she heard a giant crash.

The sound of it reverberated through the streets and Yuyu took off running. Of course the car chase would end in an accident! What if there were injuries?! What if there were civilians who had gotten caught in the crossfire?! She had no idea what she was walking into here.

She reached for her comms, “Guys, I think I finally found the car chase, but it ended in a crash, I’m gonna go check for casualties.”

“Ok, we’ll send some more heroes to help you out, just in case.”

“Thanks.”

She ended the call and ran a little faster. She just hoped that she wasn’t too late.

Izuku ran to put the car in between him and the two villains, years of outrunning bullies doing it’s job to make him just a little bit faster than his opponents. He knew the barrier wouldn’t last long, not against two strong opponents like these, but he could at least buy himself enough time to come up with a plan. What was he on now? Plan D? E? Well, somewhere around there, it didn’t really matter. What mattered was that he made it out of here alive and with the

snitch tag, that was all he needed to worry about.

His brain whirled as he ran through everything he had available to him. He had his gun, which was going to run out of ammo sooner rather than later, some basic parkour skills, and…and that was kinda it, wasn't it? Izuku jumped up and fired a few shots at the villains before ducking down behind the car again. What else could he use?

His eyes widened as he remembered that the snitch tag wasn't the only objective at stake here. There was also the weapons stash. That would work, of course assuming he could get past the villains and make it to the bed of the truck without dying. Well, it was the best option he had at the moment, so Izuku was going to take it. He steeled his courage for a moment abandoning his hiding place and sliding across the hood of the car. He shot as he ran, knowing that few, if any, of his paintballs would reach their target, but his goal wasn't to hit them right now, it was to distract them long enough for him to reach the weapons stash.

Maki grabbed at him, but Izuku ducked down out of the way just in time, using their height difference to his advantage. Sometimes it was good to be short. He grabbed the side of the truck bed and used it to pull himself up, flattening himself onto the floor to avoid a hailstorm of bullets above him.

"You know that's not gonna hide you for long!" Akiko yelled. "You really suck at hide and seek."

"Yeah, that's what my bullies said too." Izuku shot back, rolling over flat on his stomach as he searched for something that he could use. The first thing he got his hands on was a machine gun and he raised himself to his knees, not even bothering to aim as he prayed to Nedzu that the thing was loaded.

It was.

Red paint splattered across the alley as both the villains were forced to drop to the ground to avoid getting hit. When he ran out of ammo, Izuku ducked back into the truck and grabbed another gun, aiming more carefully this time. Akiko and Maki had both jumped up and were trying to run for cover, but Izuku was playing a villain right now. Shooting people in the back was just part of the job description.

Izuku grinned when both villains stopped in their tracks, slowly turning around with shocked glares as both of them took out their tokens and dropped them to the ground. He'd done it! He'd actually

won!

He heard footsteps running toward him and jerked his head up to see one of the hero students running toward him, “Hey! I heard a crash is anyone….hurt?” The student stopped in her tracks, eyes widening as she took in the scene and Izuku saw her reach up to activate her comms, “Guys, I think I’m gonna need some more backup here.”

Izuku shot her in the chest before she even finished the sentence.

“Yuyu Haya, you are now deceased. Please drop your token and wait for Ectoplasm to come retrieve you.”

Yuyu’s jaw dropped and she numbly took her token out of the pocket of her uniform. It fell to the ground with a clatter, but the kid who had just killed her didn’t even seem to care. He threw aside his gun, jumped out of the bed of the truck and ran up to the two villains who were splattered with red paint just like her, “Where is it?”

“Can’t tell you.” The female villain snarked. “We’re dead, remember?”

“Right.” The kid facepalmed and hurried to the truck. The door was already open and Yuyu watched him rummage around inside for a moment before he cheered and pulled something out of the glove compartment. “Got it!”

He froze and listened for a moment, prompting Yuyu to do the same. She could hear footsteps pounding toward them and familiar voices shouting her name. Her backup was here!

“Shit.” The kid looked around for a moment and she could practically see the gears in his head turning as he tried to find an escape route. He wouldn’t be able to get away with this, though. Her classmates were coming and they’d find him and arrest him for killing her. There was no way out.

Suddenly, the kid leapt into action, running around in a flurry of movement as he took off his jacket and accessories so that he looked almost like a normal civilian, then grabbed the two villains' tokens from the floor and ran to a manhole cover in the middle of the street. He grunted as he pulled it up and to the side, dropping his villain outfit and both of the tokens down into the hole before looking at the villains expectantly.

“Oh kid.” The larger villain rolled his eyes. “Hiding a body isn’t that

easy."

The kid glared at him for a moment before running over and dragging the villain bodily over to the manhole cover. The villain smiled, but didn't do anything to help, basically becoming dead weight so that the kid had to awkwardly half-pull, half push him to get the guy where he wanted. The kid was stronger than he looked, that was for sure, but maybe that was just the adrenaline.

The other villain just laughed and walked over to the manhole, "Oh come on, Maki, the kid killed us fair and square."

She gave him the final push down the manhole before jumping in herself and the kid smiled at them gratefully before pushing the cover back in place. She could hear her classmates getting closer, they would be rounding that corner at any moment and then it would all be over and her death would be avenged. She just had to be patient a little longer.

The kid ran over to her, eyes blazing with intensity as he leaned into her personal space, "Remember, dead bodies can't talk."

Then he took a step back and screamed.

Deception

Chapter Summary

The aftermath.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Mantishead
th demon under ur bed X
Josi

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

More Memes and an Apology at the end!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nejire ran as fast as she could down the street, pushing her way past civilians as she led a group of heroes toward Yuyu's last known location. Why had her comms cut off in the middle of a sentence like that? And to make it worse, all they'd gotten was radio silence since. Nejire was doing her best not to pull a Tamaki and expect the worst, but that was getting harder and harder the longer they didn't hear anything. She shook away the negative thoughts and tried to force herself to focus on the present moment. She couldn't save anyone if she was paralyzed with worry.

A piercing scream echoed throughout the streets and Nejire almost tripped. She exchanged a wide-eyed glance with her team and pushed herself to run a little faster. That couldn't be Yuyu's scream. It just couldn't be! She was ok. She had to be!

It didn't take long for them to track down the source of the scream. Nejire was the first to turn the corner and she immediately skidded to a stop. The street was in complete chaos. The remnants of a car accident blocked the street and there was red paint everywhere, but what immediately stood out to her was Yuyu. She was standing off to one side of the street and had a large splatter of red paint across her chest, but otherwise looked fine.

Nejire almost cried in relief as she ran up to her friend, "Yuyu! You're ok!" Slowly, Yuyu turned to look at her, a haunted look in her eyes

that stopped Nejire in her tracks. “You…you *are* ok, aren’t you?”

Tears glistened in Yuyu’s eyes and Nejire’s stomach dropped. She heard a choked sob behind her and whipped around to see a boy a few years younger than she was, tears streaming down his face as he stared at Yuyu, “She…she sacrificed herself for me.”

“W-what?” Nejire glanced between Yuyu and the boy, the panic from earlier returning with full force. “What do you mean?”

“I…” The boy sniffed, tears coming harder as he relived what had obviously been a traumatic experience. “I was just…but then the villains saw me and…and they had all these guns and…”

He broke down into incomprehensible sobs and Nejire jumped forward to put her arms around him, countless lessons on comforting civilians coming to the forefront as she rubbed the boy’s back, “It’s ok. Take your time. Just breathe, ok?”

The boy nodded and took a shaky breath, “They were going to…” He shuddered. “They were going to shoot me. I, I couldn’t run, it was… but then that hero, she….” he looked up at Nejire, eyes glistening with tears, “I owe her my life.”

The dots connected and Nejire froze. The red paint all over Yuyu’s chest, the fact that she hadn’t said a single word since the heroes had arrived, and now this boy’s firsthand account of what had happened before the heroes arrived, it all pointed to the last thing Nejire wanted to believe.

Yuyu was out of the game.

Nejire’s breath caught in her throat and there was a long moment before she remembered to breathe again. She drew in a shuddering breath and tried to ignore the way her hands were shaking as she turned back to the boy and forced a gentile smile onto her face. She was a hero, she could break down later. Right now, she had a civilian to save, “I’m sorry, I never asked you your name.”

The boy sniffed, “Izuku Midoriya.”

Nejire nodded, “Ok, Midoriya, do you know where the villains are now?”

Midoriya shook his head, “They ran away after….after…”

He started sobbing again and Nejire scooped him up into her arms, “It’s ok. It’s ok, we’ll find them.”

“They’re going to come after me again.” Midoriya looked like he was on the verge of a panic attack. “I shouldn’t have come, I knew what they would do to me if they found out, and now they’re gonna, now I’m gonna…”

Nejire blinked and pulled away slightly, “You were following the villains?”

Midoriya nodded miserably, reaching into his pocket and pulling something out. He refused to meet her eyes as he opened his fist to show her, “I’m sorry, I was just trying to help.”

Nejire gasped when she saw the objective token in Midoriya’s hand, “Objective #1, that’s…”

“The snitch.” Tears were streaming down Midoriya’s face as he looked up at her. “They’re going to kill me, aren’t they?”

“No.” Nejire’s face hardened with determination. “We’re heroes, it’s our job to protect you from villains. We won’t let Yuyu’s sacrifice go to waste, don’t worry. Come on, I… I’ll radio the others and tell them to be on the lookout for the villains, but we better get you back to the agency. Come on, it’s going to be ok.”

Izuku tucked himself closer to Nejire’s side as she started to lead him away from the crime scene, quietly repeating useless mantas that were probably meant to comfort her rather than him. He couldn't believe that that had actually worked! Sure, he still had to convince the *rest* of the heroes, but that would be easier now that he had Nejire vouching for him, not to mention he wouldn’t have to be worried about Yuyu blowing his whole story with one wrong look.

Speaking of Yuyu, Izuku risked one last look back toward the hero he had just killed. Ectoplasm should be coming to pick her up soon, but for now, she was just staring at him, mouth agape and eyes full of shock and horror as she realized what his plan was. Izuku gave her a teasing smile before turning back to Nejire and sobbing quietly again, “Can we please get out of here? There are just too many bad memories.”

“Of course.” Nejire squeezed him tightly. “Let’s get you to safety, ok?”

Not too bad for a plan C.

After the contents of the mystery boxes had all been placed, Kyoka, Kaminari and Shinso had stayed a little while to finish helping set up for the party and cement their cover as just another handful of volunteers. They'd only left a few minutes ago and the three of them were just starting to walk back to base when Kyoka heard a commotion a few streets over. She could have sworn she heard Midoriya's voice, but it almost sounded like he was crying, which couldn't be a good sign. She stopped walking, "Boys, I think Midoriya might be in trouble. I can hear him crying."

"Izuku can cry on a dime, so that's not necessarily a bad thing." Shinso shrugged. "But, yeah, we should probably check it out. He hasn't contacted me in a while."

She led the group toward the sound she'd heard. The crying hadn't let up and she could also hear people whispering. It sounded like a crowd was gathering at this point and when they rounded the last corner, Kyoka wasn't at all surprised to see the street crawling with heroes as civilians alike. She stopped and took a step backwards into the shadows, gesturing for the other two to do the same.

"What?" Kaminari whispered loudly. "Why are we stopping?"

"Because there's a swarm of heroes out there." Kyoka hissed. "Do you *want* to get caught?"

Shinso came up quietly behind her and put a hand on her shoulder "Can you hear Izuku?"

Kyoka closed her eyes and concentrated, pushing her way past the background noise until she'd pinpointed Izuku's sobs, "He's here, but he's still crying."

"Did…" Denki gulped. "Did they get him?"

Kyoka shrugged and shook her head. Shinso looked bored, but Kyoka could hear his heart beating faster, which meant he was actually panicking and just hiding it from the rest of them. He pushed past her and Kaminari, eyes darting rapidly around the street as he looked for Izuku. Kyoka was watching him carefully, so she noticed when he tensed and stopped looking around. She followed his gaze and gasped quietly when she saw Midoriya standing in the middle of a group of heroes. His face was stained with tears and he was still sobbing quietly.

“We have to save him.” Denki said, hands clenched into fists as he stepped forward. Jiro nodded and followed suit. She wasn’t quite sure how they would ever beat this many heroes, but she could feel One for All coursing through her, answering her call and buzzing beneath her skin, ready to do whatever it took to get their friend back.

As if he could feel their eyes on him, Izuku glanced in their direction, eyes widening when he saw them. He shook his head almost imperceptibly and Kyoka took another step forward, Denki doing the same before both of them were grabbed by the wrist and yanked back into the shadows.

Kyoka whirled around to glare at Hitoshi, “What are you doing?! We need to save him!”

“Izuku can handle himself.” Hitoshi didn’t even bother to look at the two of them as he dragged them away. “And he hasn’t been arrested. We planned for this.”

Kyoka dug in her heels and yanked her arm away from HItoshi. “What’s going on?”

Hitoshi sighed, “Izuku’s been playing the part of the snitch. He’ll be fine as long as he can get the heroes to trust him, but if we storm in there right now…”

“We’ll blow his cover!” Denki’s eyes widened with understanding. “But, uh, what do we do now? We just let him go with the heroes?”

Hitoshi nodded, “For now, yes. That’s exactly what we do. Now let’s get going. Tomorrow’s going to be a busy day.”

Chapter End Notes

> More Memes!
> X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X
>
> I'm alive!
>
> I apologize for worrying everyone and disapearing like that, so I guess I should answer the question that's on everyone's mind:
>
> Am I ok?
>
> Short answer: no.
> Long answer: I have been struggling with burnout and writers

block for several months now, but about when I dissapeared, I got a promoted into what would have been my dream job if the person who was supposed to train me hadn't quit on my second day. So yeah, add that stress onto my burnout and...yep. Not the best enviornment for good writing.

It hasn't been *all* bad, of course. I am now working in the field I have a degree in, they hired someone to help me out, it's renfaire/con season, and I got a boyfriend, so things are looking up, but it's still been a struggle. I just haven't had the motivation to write that I used to, which sucks.
I don't think I'm *back* back yet, we'll have to take things one day at a time.

Thank you everyone for all the support and concern, it means so much to me! I hope to get back on my feet soon and so I can keep giving you these amazing stories!

Morality

Chapter Summary

Will the heroes buy Izuku's story?

Chapter Notes

I have no excuses or explanations. I was just more burned out than I thought and my My Hero Academia phase has, sadly, come to an end. I will post what I have and hope to finish this and my other stories eventually, but it's time to start writing for other fandoms, so updates will be sporadic at best as the old hyperfixations come back into rotation.

For all the amazing art, memes and fan content that has come out in the past eight or so months since I last updated, please check out the discord.

Thank you so much for reading and enjoying!

At some point, things in the dead room had turned into a giant movie night. There were piles of blankets strewn about the floor and a few bowls of popcorn that everyone had forgotten about as they sat, eyes glued to the screen and as they watched Shadow's backup plans fail one by one by one. It was the most suspenseful thing that Electra had ever seen as over and over again, Midoriya had to scramble to come up with new plans on the fly and somehow make them work.

Honestly, the most impressive part of the whole thing was that the kid hadn't given up yet. Electra had known a lot of people, even a lot of heroes, who would have given up after the first or second failed plan. It was part of what made a hero's job doable, after all. Get a villain cornered enough and they'll turn themselves in or come quietly. It was the ones like Midoriya, though, that were the most terrifying, simply because they never gave up.

When villains like him were cornered, they fought back.

Everyone was so caught up in watching the screen that they hadn't noticed the door opening until a new voice gasped, "Wait, we get to watch ourselves die?! Cool!"

The entire room collectively jumped and whirled around to face the

door. They'd all been so wrapped up in what was on the screen that no one had noticed three new *bodies* walk into the room. Electra glanced back toward the screen and sure enough, the three people in front of her were busy on screen, heading right into a trap that had obviously been successful if their presence here was any indication.

The two villains immediately started weaving their way through the maze of blankets and couches, grinning as they seamlessly joined in with the group. The hero, however, hovered by the door. After a few minutes, some of the other dead hero students went to comfort her and Electra took a long last look at the screen before she joined them. She'd been taken completely by surprise when Shadows had killed her, and from the looks of it, this girl was pretty much in the same boat. Actually, now that she thought about it, most of them were.

She gently put her arm around the kid's shoulder, just like she usually did when comforting the victim of a villain attack, "Hey, how are you feeling."

"Numb." The girl lifted her eyes to look at the screen. "And angry."

"It was that green kid, wasn't it?" The kid with the shark head snarled. "He's the one that killed me too."

The girl shook her head, "I'm not mad about what he did, necessarily. I'm just mad that they believed him."

She ignored everyone's confused looks, pushing past them to sit on the couch and Electra stared after her. Just what had Shadows done?

They all turned their attention back to the screen and the vibes in the room quickly turned from a cozy movie night into a championship sports game as they watched Midoriya pull off the absolutely most insane plan they had ever seen. But no matter how much they screamed at the screen the players still couldn't hear them.

Half the teachers' jaws were still on the floor as they watched their students lead one of the villains *directly* into their base of operations, all while the kid soaked up comfort and attention because of the death of a hero. A hero that he himself had killed. The students were going to have so many trust issues.

"There's got to be something wrong with the kid, right?" Present Mic gestured toward the Midoriya on the screen. "Like psychologically. No normal kid would do something like that."

Aizawa snorted, “You are severely underestimating normal kids.”

“Aizawa is correct.” Nedzu set down his teacup. “All children are born with an innate sense of chaos and display an age appropriate lack of empathy. What makes Midoriya’s strategy so intriguing is not so much the questionable morality of his decisions but rather the frightening intelligence he displays in even coming up with them.”

“He was cornered and managed to find a way out. It’s admirable.” All Might nodded. “That being said, his plan relies entirely on deception and I can’t forgive that. A real hero faces his problems head on.”

“Oh, get off your high horse Toshinori, the kid’s not playing the part of a hero right now.” Gran Torino smacked him over the head. “And even if he was, not everyone’s strong enough to just punch away all their problems. Some people can’t afford to rely on brute strength, unlike *someone* I know.”

All Might sputtered indignantly. “I…”

“Now, now, don’t be so hard on him.” Nedzu tsked. “However, let’s not forget that Midoriya is at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to physical ability.”

“Are we really sure the young'uns quirkless?” snipe asked. “It seems like he’s got to have an analysis quirk or intelligence or *something.”*

“I have no reason to believe so.” Nedzu smiled. “The human mind has frightening potentials.”

The teachers shuddered slightly at Nedzu's excitement and the room fell into silence as they watched their students gather around Midoriya, who was still crying crocodile tears.

“How long do you think it’ll take for them to figure it out?” Ectoplasm asked.

“Well, assuming that the students leading him to their agency technically counts as capturing him, they have 24 hours.” Midnight said.

“But they didn’t *intend* to capture him.” Recovery Girl pointed out. “They don’t even think he’s a villain at this point.”

“Eh, that seems like a tomorrow type of question.” Gran Torino laughed and laid back in his seat. “I for one don’t think it’s going to

take that long. All Might looked up in surprise. “You really think they’ll figure it out?”

“Oh no.” Gran Torino laughed. “I think that crazy kid is already plotting his next move.”

Izuku tried not to let his shock show as his eyes flicked around the room. He couldn’t believe that the heroes had actually let him just *walk* into their agency. Sure, that had been the plan, but he hadn’t really expected it to *work,* especially not after the string of failures earlier in the day. It was sheer dumb luck and determination that had gotten him this far, and he wasn’t planning on letting this opportunity go to waste.

He was currently seated in what looked like a briefing room while all the hero students slowly trickled in one by one. Most of them were eying him with at least some level of distrust, but he could fix that! His brain was already coming up with ten different lies and half-truths that he could use to cement their trust in him. None of them would last very long, of course, but he didn’t need them to. His cover would be blown by tonight anyway.

The last hero to enter the room was Mirio Togata, the one who could phase through walls. It was a difficult quirk to combat and Izuku wasn’t quite sure how he was going to get around yet, but he’d deal with that when he had to. For now, though, his biggest concern was playing the part of a poor, helpless snitch who had nothing left to hide.

Nejire hurried to greet Mirio as soon as he walked in the door and Izuku strained his ears to hear her whispering, “We found the snitch. He was running away from the villain when Yuyu tried to save him, but…she didn’t make it. The kid saw the whole thing, so, just be careful with him, ok? He’s still pretty shaken up.”

Izuku watched out of the corner of his eye as Mirio shot him a pitying glance and started whispering back, “ *He’s* the snitch? But he’s just a kid!”

Nejire shrugged helplessly and Mirio took a deep breath before smiling and walking over to kneel down in front of Izuku’s chair, “Hey kid! My name’s LeMillion. My friend told me that you’re the one I’ve been talking to the last couple of days.”

Izuku nodded, adding in a sniff as he wiped his eyes and tried to look

as small as possible, “I’m sorry if I’ve been annoying you. I…I was just trying to help.”

“Oh don’t cry!” Mirio looked slightly panicked, but he kept up his hero smile, which Izuku could respect. “You really were helpful!”

“Helpful at leading us into traps.” Ogawa cut in. “How can we believe a word you say?”

“Hey!” Nejire shot him a dirty look. “Take some pity on the kid, can’t you see he’s been through it?”

Ogawa winced and looked a little sheepish, but the suspicion didn’t leave his eyes, “I’m just saying that it seems kinda weird that he appeared out of nowhere right as all of our classmates started dying. And he’s a kid? Doesn’t anybody else think that things aren’t quite adding up?”

“I…I think it’s weird too.” Amajiki was facing the wall and didn’t turn around as he spoke. “This, um, this whole thing is probably going to end really badly. We don’t even know how he ended up with the villains.”

Izuku widened his eyes as he saw the perfect opportunity and let his lower lip quiver slightly before he burst into tears. As expected, the heroes around him started panicking and both Mirio and Nejire rushed to comfort him. Amajiki tensed, his body shaking, “What…what did I say.”

“I’m sorry.” Izuku gulped his next breath. “I…I never wanted to be a villain. They…they made me…”

“Hey, it’s ok.” Mirio patted his shoulder awkwardly. “You don’t have to talk about it if you’re not ready.”

“No. You…you deserve to know.” Izuku set his shoulders in an act of bravery. “They pretended to care about me, and I really wanted to believe them because….” He paused before continuing, “but, um, it was nice and I didn’t want to lose that. I finally had adults who cared about me and didn’t care that I was… well, I guess I just ignored it when the things they were asking me to do got worse and worse and then…I only ever wanted to help!”

“So you just got in too deep?” Mirio asked slowly.

Izuku nodded piteously.

“Wait, you’re seriously just going to believe that sob story?” Ogawa said incredulously. “He’s obviously leaving out information! I’m not going to trust him until he actually tells us the full truth.”

“Stop being so hard on him.” Nejire hugged Izuku protectively. “He’s just a kid!”

“It’s ok.” Izuku took a shuddering breath. “He’s right. You guys deserve the full truth. They were nice to me, but that’s not the only reason I trusted them. I went along with them because they were strong and they promised to protect me, because…because I’m too weak to defend myself.” Izuku balled his hands into fists and spoke quietly, “I’m quirkless.”

He let his eyes sweep across the room, a weird sense of accomplishment blending in with the usual hurt as he saw their opinion of him turn on its head, just like it always did whenever he told anyone about his quirk. In an instant, their suspicion had turned to pity and they saw him exactly how he wanted them to see him: weak and defenseless. It was ok. Izuku reminded himself of that as the heroes exchanged awkward glances. It was all part of the plan.

“I…I’m sorry.” Ogawa muttered, embarrassed. “I didn’t realize you were being manipulated.”

“Why risk betraying them?” Amajiki asked quietly.

“Well, I can’t be a hero myself, so…” Izuku wiped away his tears and gave a bright smile, “I just want to help the heroes become better!”

It was almost too easy.

“I would say that I can’t believe they bought that, but…” Mic grimaced. “We kinda underestimated him too, didn’t we?”

Aizawa groaned, “It’s a common fallacy.”

“One that we are going to have to correct.” Nedzu said. “They believe he couldn’t possibly pose a threat to him, just because he doesn’t have a quirk. They are about to be proven wrong.”

“Yeah, I mean most everyone who’s died so far has been killed by one of the Shadows.” Midnight said. “Oh, that reminds me, I made a chart! It’s on the printer!”

She ran out of the room and came back a minute later with a giant roll of paper. She struggled to unroll it and a few of the other teachers stood up to help her tack it to the wall, revealing a poster with all of the hero and villain photos. Once it was up, she grabbed a marker and started making X's over the faces of everyone who had died so far, circled the ones who had been arrested, and added tally marks along the side for the dead civilians. Then she stood back and let everyone take a good long look.

Mic whisted lowly, "Again, are we sure these kids aren't secretly mob bosses?"

"They passed all our background checks." Nedzu said with a smile. "They just managed to surprise us. Oh, I really can't wait to teach them!"

Betrayal

Chapter Summary

Remember that promise about stabbing each other in the back?

Shiguro stretched and closed up his pawn shop. Not too many villains had come into his shop this time around, only those two kids, but somehow he'd ended up with less inventory than normal even though he could have sworn he brought the same amount. He hoped that the kids had at least had time to have fun with the weapons he sold them before the heroes came after them today. Maybe they had even captured a few objectives! They were nice kids and they didn't really deserve to be betrayed like this, but this was just the way the game was played.

Well, at least they'd know to be more careful about who they trust in the future.

Mirio rubbed the sleep from his eyes as he walked into the kitchen for breakfast. Even though it was ridiculously early, the snitch was already sitting at the table. He was young, probably no more than 12 or 13, and obviously hadn't slept well judging by the bags under his eyes. Izuku Midoriya. Nedzu must be feeling extra sadistic to make the snitch a middle schooler, especially one who was quirkless and couldn't defend himself. What if they had tried attacking him?! He could have gotten seriously hurt!

Mirio understood the lesson that Nedzu was going for, more or less. Not all villains were the incarnations of evil that hero society sometimes made them out to be, and sometimes didn't want to be villains at all. That was why there were programs that helped villains start on the path of redemption so that they could rejoin society as productive individuals. Giving valuable information to the heroes was a part of that process, even when the villain in question was a poor little quirkless kid who just deserved to have a normal life away from all this. Sure, Mirio theoretically knew that Midoriya was just an actor for some contracting company or another, but it still hurt Mirio's heart that there were probably kids out in the world in the same situation, so he'd just have to treat Midoriya the exact same as he would any of those children.

He nodded resolutely and gave a bright smile, "Good Morning

Midoriya! Have you eaten breakfast yet?”

Midoriya must not have noticed Mirio come in, because he flinched at the sound of his voice, “Uh, not yet.”

“Well, then, let’s fix that!” Mirio walked over to the cupboard and got out two muffins, then tossed one to Midoriya. “Eat up!”

“T-thank you.” Midoriya gave him a shaky smile. “Not just for breakfast. For, um, everything. For trusting me. It really means a lot.”

Mirio smiled a little more genuinely, “Of course! I mean, that’s what heroes are for right? Getting good people out of bad situations! And you’ve done a lot to help us too, you know. We were all talking about it last night and at this point, we’ve basically got the rest of the exercise in the bag! We have most of the villain’s objectives here at the agency, which means that they’ll have to come here to get them and we’ll have the upper hand, especially now that we have you to tell us all their weaknesses. Honestly, by this time tomorrow, the exercise will be practically over!”

Midoriya nodded frantically in agreement, but neither of them had the chance to say anything else before the sound of a doorbell echoed through the agency. They looked at each other in confusion for a moment, then stood up and Mirio made sure Midoriya stayed protected behind him as they headed in the direction of the front door.

By the time they got there, many of his classmates were already gathered. Someone had actually opened the door at some point and there was a man who Mirio didn’t recognize standing in the doorway.

The man gave them a jaunty smile, “Hello there heroes, I’m here to make you an offer.”

Hitoshi wasn’t really an early riser, but he was an insomniac, which meant that when Izuku called him on his comms, he was still awake. He’d spent most of the night going over the plans they’d made for if one of them was arrested and memorizing any adjustments, so he hadn’t really gotten any sleep, but then again, he was used to it. The eyebags matched the scare-everyone-out-of-their-minds aesthetic.

“Hey Hitoshi.” Izuku spoke quietly “Is Jiro listening?”

Hitoshi walked into the other room and made sure she was lying on

the floor breathing deeply before walking back and responding, “She’s asleep. What’s going on?”

“The pawn shop guy stopped by the agency this morning.” Izuku said. “I’m planning on telling the heroes exactly where those two are hiding to cement the heroes’ trust in me, which means…”

“That I need to get out of the apartment and erase all evidence we were even here.” Hitoshi finished. “They still know something’s going down at the charity event tonight, though. What if they talk?”

“It’s a risk, I have a plan for that.” Izuku sounded like he was smiling. “Remember, we still have that villain group that owes us a favor.”

Hitoshi nodded. He’d been expecting this so it wouldn’t take too much effort to erase his and Izuku’s presence. Just grabbing a few of their things and erasing all of Izuku’s mad scientist walls. It would take him fifteen minutes, tops.

Ten minutes later, Hitoshi was ready to go, a duffel bag of weapons and personal items slung over his back. He peeked his head into the room where Kyoka and Denki were, just to make sure they were still asleep. They looked so peaceful and for a moment, Hitoshi wondered if he should wake them up and tell them to run as well. It would probably ruin some of his and Izuku’s plans, but these two were their friends, and didn’t friends protect each other?

Hitoshi shook his head. People with quirks like his didn’t get to have friends. After this was all over, Denki and Kyoka would go back to their normal lives, with their normal quirks and, even if they decided to train more with the control aspects of their quirks, they still wouldn’t be considered villainous like he was. They’d see how other people treated him and how others would treat them just for being associated with him and they’d leave, just like everyone else had.

He adjusted the bag on his shoulder and turned on his heel. He didn’t let himself look back, even after he’d left the apartment behind. They’d all known from the beginning that they would be stabbing each other in the back, if that’s what it took to win.

Hitoshi was just following the plan.

Nedzu’s fur bristled as he got the alert that a hero commission representative had entered the gates. They didn’t show up every year, but more often than not, someone from the commission would come

sometime during the exercise and demand to see how the students were faring. They framed it as an evaluation of the teacher's effectiveness, but they all knew what it really was. They were looking for the best, brightest, and most easily manipulated students to turn into their own personal weapons.

Nedzu would just as soon throw them right back onto the street, but UA received a healthy portion of its funding from government subsidies, so his paws were tied. Oh how he hated humans and their red tape.

The unwelcome guest gradually made their way to the viewing room and, as much as it was tempting to make them put in the work to open their own door, he still pressed a button to make it open right as they arrived. He had to maintain a bit of power *somehow*.

"Hey." They'd sent Mera, who yawned as he walked inside. "I see it's still impossible to surprise you, Principal Nedzu."

"Ah, well I wouldn't be a decent principal if any adult or student could surprise me, now would I?" Nedzu gave a smile that was all sharp teeth, Mera wasn't nearly as bad as some of the others they could have sent, but he still reported directly to the commission. "Now how can I help you?"

Mera shrugged, "I'm just here to see how your exercise is going. So?"

The teachers glanced at each other before Aizawa spoke up, "The students are getting too cocky."

Mera frowned and looked at the poster on the wall, "Are these the people who have already been eliminated?"

"The crossed out ones, yes." Cementoss nodded. "The circled ones are currently in hero custody. Two of the remaining villains *were* in custody, but escaped."

"Looking at this, they deserve to be cocky." Mera nodded in approval. "Almost all of the villains are either eliminated or in hero custody and it looks like they're moving to arrest another two of the villains as we speak. Even though the heroes have suffered some categories, they are still decidedly coming out on top. Which ones are the ones that escaped hero custody?"

Thirteen pointed out the Hotta brothers and Mera nodded as he looked more closely at the photos, "Your students are doing better

than I thought. Those two escapees are the only real threats, the others are just kids."

Mic started laughing loudly and a few of the other teachers stifled chuckles. Mera looked around the room in confusion, "Your students have practically already won, there's only two real threats left."

"Oh, you're right about that." Aizawa gave a terrifying grin. "But it isn't the two that you think."

Nedzu took a sip of tea, "With only two threats remaining, I would normally agree with you that a hero victory is practically guaranteed, however, normally the villains aren't pulling strings behind the scenes from the moment the game begins."

"Oh?" Mera looked at the screen curiously. "Which two are we talking about?"

Nedzu knew that the commission would likely take interest in the boys, but he couldn't resist seeing Mera's reaction as he slid over the boy's files. "Please, allow me to introduce you to the Shadows."

Kyoka woke up with a distinct feeling that something was wrong. One for All sung through her, warning her about *something,* but she took a deep breath and it settled into a nervous hum. First of all, the apartment was quiet. Normally, there was at least the white noise of Izuku muttering to himself, but right now? Nothing. Jiro's stomach dropped as she woke up a little more. That's right, Izuku had gotten taken into custody last night.

She looked around the room. Denki was asleep on the floor near the opposite wall, just like she'd left him last night, but Hitoshi was nowhere to be seen. Silently, Kyoka got to her feet and made her way through the rest of the apartment. The nervous music of One for All increased in tempo alongside her heartbeat as she slowly realized that not only was Hitoshi gone, but all of his stuff was too.

Suddenly all those conversations about stabbing each other in the back were making a lot more sense.

She went back into the bedroom and jabbed Denki with one of her earphone jacks. He startled awake and Kyoka had to jump back to avoid getting electrocuted, "Well good morning to you too."

"Kyoka?" Denki blinked and rubbed his eyes. "What…just why?"

Kyoka threw a backpack into his hands, “Grab your stuff, we gotta get out of here.”

“Uh…ok?” Denki scrambled to grab the backpack. “Any particular reason?”

Kyoka leveled him with a serious look, “Hitoshi’s gone.”

Denki did a cute little head tilt, “He’s gone? Where did he go?”

“Away from here.” Kyoka huffed. “Think about it, Denki. Izuku gets taken into hero custody and suddenly Hitoshi’s nowhere to be found? Connect the dots.”

Denki’s eyes widened, “Wait, you really think they’d…seriously?!”

“I think that turning us in would be a good way to make sure the heroes trust Izuku.” Kyoka shrugged. “And the Shadows will do whatever it takes to …”

“Ok, so if they turned us in, then that might just be part of Izuku’s plan, right?” Denki bit his lip in thought. “I mean, we’ll still have 24 hours to escape and he’ll be right there in the agency to break us out!”

Kyoka shot him a look of pity. She really hoped he was right, but from all the context clues plus her quirk going crazy, she really didn’t think so. If they wanted to continue in the game, they needed to get out of here. Now.

“Are you ready yet, slowpoke?”

Denki nodded and Kyoka ran toward the door, yanking it open only to realize that they were a little too late.

“Oh, hello!” That blond hero with the annoying smile had his hand raised to knock on the door, a full team of heroes behind him, all ready to fight. “I guess this saves me the trouble of phasing through!”

They were screwed.

Favors

Chapter Summary

The Shadows call in a favor

Denki awkwardly looked across at their cellmates. It had been a full fifteen minutes since the heroes had thrown them in here and yet none of the three of them had even said a word to them, just glaring whenever Denki or Kyoka ever made the mistake of looking their way. The biggest one shot a particularly nasty glare at them and Denki hurried to look away, “So, uh….when do you think the Shadows are coming to save us?”

Kyoka gave him a pitying look.

“What?” Denki asked. “Izuku always has a plan! Us getting arrested was probably, I don’t know, like some master plan to get us into the hero agency or something. Any minute now, he’s gonna come walking through that door, or Hitoshi’s gonna brainwash one of the heroes and…”

“They’re not coming.” Kyoka cut him off. “Don’t take it personal, but they’re in this game to win, no matter who they have to stab in the back to do that. You do realize that they set us up right? The heroes knew exactly where we were.”

“Oh come on.” Now it was Denki’s turn to roll his eyes. “They’re good guys, and our friends, they wouldn’t do something like that.”

Kyoka shrugged, “Your funeral.”

The heroes hadn’t left anyone in here to guard them, apparently confident in their prison’s ability to keep them in, but Denki noticed the cameras in every corner, so they still weren’t *alone,* at least, not really. The heroes were watching their every move.

Suddenly, Kyoka tensed, “Someone’s coming.”

Sure enough, a few seconds later, Denki started to hear footsteps echoing down the hall. Denki turned toward the sound and his face spit into a grin when he saw Izuku walking toward their cell, “Hey man! It’s so good to see you, what took you so long?”

“Oh, it took me a bit to hack into the security system and turn off the

cameras so the heroes wouldn't know I'm down here. " Izuku smiled, but something seemed… *off* somehow. He wasn't giving Denki his friendly smile, he was giving him the calculated one he normally reserved for villains.

Denki shook it off, Kyoka's suspicions must just be getting to him, Izuku wouldn't treat them like that. They were friends! He ran up to the bars as Izuku got closer, "So what's the plan? Are you going to pick the lock? Hack into the security system? How are you getting us out?"

Izuku didn't even acknowledge his question. Instead, he turned to talk to their cellmates, "I believe the three of you still owe a favor to Shadows."

When the three villains reluctantly nodded, Izuku's smile got a little sharper. He reached into his pocket, pulled out one of the game knives, the ones with paint along the edges to simulate blood, and tossed it to one of the villains. She caught it in one fluid motion and Denki felt a chill run down his spine when Izuku jerked his head toward him and Kyoka.

"Kill them."

Denki's jaw dropped as Izuku turned on his heel and walked away. He didn't even have the decency to look back at the *friends* that he had just condemned to death. Kyoka had already fallen into a combat stance. Honestly, she had probably been tensing for a fight from the moment she heard Izuku coming. She'd told him that but Denki had been too trusting…too *stupid,* to do the same.

The villains didn't waste any time. The one with the knife lunged for him and Denki scrambled as he tried to adjust to a fight that he hadn't been expecting. He stumbled backwards, tripping over his feet and fell to the floor, which meant he avoided getting stabbed, but more through luck than skill. The next attack was almost immediate and Denki barely managed to roll out of the way in time. His heartbeat was through the roof. He wasn't ready for this. He hadn't been prepared for Izuku and Hitoshi to betray them.

He couldn't do this.

There was a sharp poke in his side and then suddenly his heart was beating a bit slower and the blind panic retreated a little bit, just enough for him to be able to coat his body in electricity and get their enemies off their backs for the moment. It took him about two seconds

to figure out why he was suddenly so calm and look over at Kyoka. Her expression was disinterested as she twirled her earphone jack around her finger, but Denki could see the concern she was trying to keep buried. It was sweet.

She raised an eyebrow questioningly, “you good?”

Denki chuckled nervously, “Uh, no.”

“Yeah, ok. That’s fair.” Kyoka dodged a tackle from one of the villains. “But you do realize this is just a game, right? It’s not like they hate us or anything, they just want to win.”

Denki paused

One of the guys trying to kill them groaned, “Look, are you guys just going to keep blabbering or are you gonna fight?”

Denki grinned and the room grew bright with static electricity, “Oh, we’re gonna fight. Our friends might want us dead, but that doesn’t mean we can’t take you with us!”

Kyoka smirked, “That’s more like it.”

Izuku did not let himself feel conflicted as he walked away from the holding cell, the sounds of a fight echoing behind him until he went up the stairs and closed the doors behind him. Denki and Kyoka had strong quirks. Even if they lost here and didn’t get a single objective, Izuku knew that they would still get into UA without having to fight against centuries worth of prejudice to even get considered. He and Hitoshi didn’t have that privilege. They had exactly one chance to prove that they were skilled and dangerous enough to be heroes and he wasn’t planning on wasting a single second of it.

The heroes hadn’t even noticed that Izuku wasn’t where he was supposed to be. Even hero students who were trained to be on constant alert to threats were so used to thinking that the quirkless were weak that it was almost as good as having an invisibility quirk! He silently slipped back into the common room. A few of the heroes were out on patrol, but now that most of the villains had been captured, there wasn’t the same rush to go out and fight as there had been.

Sometime while he’d been gone, someone must have gone out for the mail because there was a fancy envelope in Nejire’s hands, “Hey,we

just got invited to attend this charity dinner tonight!"

Amajiki was pacing around anxiously, "Shouldn't we all be out looking for the last of the villains?"

"What are they going to accomplish?" Nejire shrugged. "We're holding pretty much all of the objectives, which means they'll have to come here if they want to get any of them. At this point, we're mostly just waiting for them to come to us."

Izuku smiled slightly, this was working out perfectly, "I think that going to the charity dinner would be a great way to celebrate you guys winning the exercise! Seeing their heroes support good causes is a great way to boost civilian morale and increase public confidence!"

"All those people…" Amajiki shuddered, "Please no…"

"Well, we don't *all* have to go." Mirio laughed. "At least some of us need to stay behind and keep the agency running, not to mention normal patrols, but I think it would be fun!"

Izuku grinned widely, "I'm sure you'll have a blast."

Gala

Chapter Summary

The big charity gala begins!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Cameras flashed as Nejire made her way down the red carpet. She put on her biggest smile, giggling for the cameras as she tried to remember everything their teachers had tried to drill into their heads during media trainings. So this was what she had to look forward to when she graduated, huh? She hadn't become a hero for fame, but she had to admit that this was really kinda fun!.

Nejire waved at another camera. Only about half the heroes were here tonight. The other half had either been left behind to guard the objectives in the agency with Mirio or had gone out patrolling like Amajiki. She had wanted to bring Izuku along to the party too. He was so cute and shy and probably needed some nice normal experiences after the trauma of being targeted by those nasty villains, but Amajiki had pointed out that there were still villains out there who might try to go after him and he was safer at the agency. He was right, of course, but she still wished everyone had been able to come. It was kinda weird that the villains hadn't tried to attack the agency yet to get their objectives, but there were still a few days left in the exercise and Mirio had said they were probably waiting for the cover of darkness, which was why he had ended up staying behind to guard them.

Maybe after the exercise was over they could all get together and go to another fancy party together to celebrate their victory! Nejire grinned wider and started making mental plans as she walked into the party.

Mirio flipped through the security footage of all the rooms in the agency. None of the remaining villains had tried to break in yet, so everything was calm. Even the prisoners weren't doing anything, just sitting in the same positions that they had been in all day. Overall, much more boring than the party that Nejire had gone to. Mirio kind of wished that he hadn't volunteered to stay behind, but he had

become a hero to save a million people, not to go to fancy charity parties. Plus, he'd been absolutely certain that the villains were going to break in tonight and he didn't want to miss it!

Maybe Amajiki would come back early and he could use it as an excuse to go to the party later…

The door to the control room slammed open and Ogawa ran in, practically shoving him aside.

Mirio raised an eyebrow, "Well hello to you too."

"Somebody messed with our cameras."

"No. That's impossible." Mirio looked at the cameras. "We would have noticed."

"Yeah, well, we didn't." Ogawa slammed a handful of tokens down on the table. "Our prisoners are dead."

Amajiki weaved his way through the back alleys of the city. He'd manifested a bear's nose so that he could track the scent of the escaped villains he was tracking, the Hotta brothers. It was hard in such a large city, but he'd managed to pick up their scent a few minutes ago and now the scent was getting stronger, which meant he must be close. He saw an apartment building at the end of the street. They were probably hiding out there.

He was glad he had an excuse to get out of the party tonight. It would be loud and there would be too many people who would be staring at them because of their role as heroes in the exercise. It would be perfect for the likes of Nejire and Mirio, but for him it just sounded miserable. He'd much rather be out in the shadows where he could avoid all the attention.

He manifested wings and flew up to the window where the scent was strongest. A quick peak inside confirmed that the villains were inside and Amajiki broke the window. It was nice to have a fight to focus on.

Hitoshi sat on a rooftop across from the gala and watched the last of the stragglers disappear inside the building. Only about half the remaining heroes had decided to come tonight, which was about how many he and Izuku had planned on. It didn't matter too much, this attack was more to deal a blow to the heroes' morale than anything

else. They wanted to kill as many heroes as possible, sure, but the real goal would be the effect on the ones who remained.

He texted Izuku an update and smiled when he immediately got a text back.

Go time.

One of the other heroes shushed Nejire as the party organizer stood up to make a speech. Everyone gave a polite round of applause as the woman in charge made her way to the center of the stage and grabbed the microphone.

“Hello everyone.” the woman smiled. “I’d like to thank you all for coming and a special thanks to everyone who helped to pull off this last minute gala! It has been a wonderful way to pass the time this week and…”

A deafening boom shook the room and Nejire instinctively closed her eyes for a split second. Her ears were ringing so much that she almost didn’t realize people were screaming. Her eyes flew open and she immediately went on alert. There was red paint splattered around the room and as she scanned the room she saw multiple people dropping their tokens, including the classmate sitting next to her. Nejire looked down and saw red paint staining her legs and abdomen.

Nedzu’s voice echoed in her ear, “You are severely injured from the bombs, please proceed with the exercise accordingly.”

Mirio’s comms crackled to life and Nejire’s voice echoed in his ear, “Attention all heroes. There was an explosion at the gala. Both hero and civilian casualties.”

He was out the door before she even finished speaking.

The dead room went silent with sock.

“Oh.” Denki gulped dryly. “So that’s what those things were.”

“Yeah…” Jiro frowned. “But, uh, I…” She shook her head and closed her mouth.

Denki gave her a look, “But what?”

“It’s just…” Kyoka lowered her voice. “Didn’t we move in a lot more boxes than that?”

Chapter End Notes

Welp, that's what I've got for now! I'll see you when the motivation for this story returns!

End Notes

This fic has a Discord. and a TV Tropes Page!
If you want to yell at me, please leave a comment or find me on tiktok or tumblr.
I am fine with any translations or fanworks based on my stories. My only rule is that if you post something based on my writing, give me the link so I can enjoy it as well!

Works inspired by this one

Bright Eyes and Wide Smiles by 7urtlepirate, "For The Want Of A Nail" things can change by HeadcaseKiller, When Paths Intersect (And Break) by FieldsOfSouls, Voidful_Abyss, Reacting to the FTWOAN Series by CrazyHope13, They Are Not The Same (Not Fully At The Very Least) by PancakeFlowers, All for the want of a horseshoe nail by Fandom_Compass, Five Problem Children? by 1zu_00 (orphan_account)

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